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D A C R E :

A NOVEL.

EDITED BY

THE COUNTESS OF MORLEY.

Un ouvrage d'imagination ne doit pas avoir un bût moral, mais un résultat moral. Il doit ressembler, à cet égard, à la vie humaine, qui n'a pas un bût, mais qui toujours a un résultat dans lequel la morale trouve nécessairement sa place.

BENJAMIN CONSTANT.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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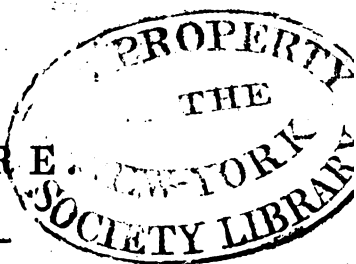
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D A C R E .



## CHAPTER I.

The company is "mix'd" (the phrase I quote is  
As much as saying, they're beneath your notice.)

BYRON.

"I WONDER at what time we may expect Mr. Dacre," exclaimed Mrs. Plummer, as she folded up her work, and drew her chair towards the fire, in order to give herself up wholly to the pleasures of what she called "a comfortable bit of talk:" but every body was so accustomed to hear Mrs. Plummer wonder about all coming events, that none listened to her speculations, unless compelled by repetition to give her some token that she was not a visitor to the Deaf and Dumb Asylum. "I suppose you young ladies often met Mr. Dacre in London last spring," continued she, addressing two sisters who were seated on an opposite sofa—the one embroidering a skreen for any refugees that might next season require a bazaar; the other, with equal diligence, copying the Mazurka that had been confided to her by Lady E. D., and on no account to be given to any body else, having been allowed only to catch it by ear from Lady C. B.

Mrs. Plummer still got no answer. She was an acknowledged "bore," and therefore not to be encouraged. Moreover, she was a country bore: and though it might be very well for the Molesworths to receive her because she was a relation (and not a poor one), there could be no occasion for the guests at Thornbury Park either to listen or to talk to her. So thought the Misses Ashby; and ac-

cordingly the youngest took no notice, and the eldest merely looked up, with a vacant smile, as if she did just know she had been addressed, but was quite unconscious what was said.

Perhaps Mrs. Plummer would have been daunted by this discouraging reception of her endeavours to get up a little conversation, had not a fortunate reinforcement saved her from the danger of being obliged to re-open the large worsted-work carpet border, that had been carefully rolled up and deposited in her capacious basket, or of retiring to her room without a syllable of chat before the dressing-bell rang.

She was rescued from this frightful alternative by the entry of Mr. John Molesworth, his brother Harry, and his cousin George Saville. They had returned from shooting; an event which ensures in all country houses some little commotion in the room. The pet dog receives from the tip of a thick-soled shoe a gentle hint to resign his comfortable post on the hearth-rug; the ladies suddenly find themselves excluded from the sight of the fire; while, with eyes cast down upon the shoes and gaiters that have robbed the fields of their soil, apologies are made for the unseemliness of their appearance, and assurances are given that it matters not the least.

Miss Ashby now ceased to work; Miss Cecilia quitted the writing-table; Mr. Rowley shut up the volume of the peerage, in which he had been tracing the genealogy of a neighbouring family; Mary Bingley, the adopted daughter of Mrs. Molesworth, laid down her book; and all assembled round the fire-place with such a decided appearance of coming conversation, as convinced the talkative Mrs. Plummer that silence would cease to reign, and that somebody would at least listen to somebody—and perhaps to her.

“I suppose you have had capital sport,” said the loquacious old lady, addressing the sportsmen.

“Nothing particular,” replied John Molesworth.

“Well! I say we have had very good sport, and have bagged enough for one day’s cruise,” rejoined Harry, the naval hero of the family.

“What ideas you fellows have!” said George Saville, in a tone of good-humoured pity—“You’ll not catch me

again toiling all day to procure food for the family consumption."

"Dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Plummer, "where can the game be gone? Mr. Molesworth always used to have more than enough for himself and his friends too."

"Ah! well, may-be there is as much as a rabbit to spare to the parson. Really," continued he, addressing the Misses Ashby, "when one comes so far from London, one expects to be rewarded by getting at least country sports in perfection; but the nearer to town the better everything is to be found. I go on Monday to Woolston, not twenty miles from London. The Duke of —— will be there. That is shooting," said he, emphatically: "never was anything better done. The last time I was there they had got five hundred pheasants, and turned them out two days before; and they treat them really like civilized beings, and always feed them with figs and raisins. Ah! there you have something like a *battue*!"

"I don't see the fun of *battues*," replied John. "I would just as soon shoot at the fowls in the poultry-yard, as stand all day to have the game driven down the muzzle of my gun."

"My dear fellow, it is all very well to affect to despise what you do not possess; but, remember, the first object in life is to save one's self trouble; and the more we can book, at the least possible expense of personal exertion, the better."

Young Saville now threw himself upon the sofa where Miss Ashby was seated; and, having secured his personal comfort by the application of a cushion to his back and the bar of the table to his feet, looked both at her and her sister, as if he expected to be noticed, talked to, and perhaps amused. The hint was kindly taken; and the young ladies, immediately recurring to his mention of Woolston, commenced, in a tone as loud and animated as if they were talking for the benefit of all, a discussion on persons and topics unknown to the rest of the party.

Poor Mrs. Plummer, who loved to impart both her speculations and her facts, was again in danger of becoming a mere listener, when Harry Molesworth announced his intention of walking out to meet his friend Dacre. This was an opening.



"I wonder," said she, "whether I shall know him again? I hope he is as handsome as people say."

"Does Dacre come to-day?" said Mr. Saville, without noticing Mrs. Plummer's attempt to take part in the conversation.

The Misses Ashby supposed he did, with as much indifference as young ladies should express respecting the arrival of any young man of note and fortune.

"I long to know him," said Mary Bingley; "I am sure I shall like him."

"Candidly said, Miss Bingley!" observed Saville: "most people feel sure of liking a good-looking fellow, with a handsome competency."

"Come, come, George," said John Molesworth, "I won't have little Mary bullied by any body; she knows very well that Harry and Dacre are friends, and that we all mean to like him accordingly."

Mary blushed, and looked almost as much confused by the defence of her champion, as at the railleury of young Saville. The Misses Ashby were evidently shocked at her interest in the arrival of the expected guest; and, though they smiled a little at Mr. Saville's observation, they prudently maintained a dignified silence, till the simplicity of Mary and the bluntness of John had subsided.

Questions and answers now passed in quick succession, upon the subject of Mr. Dacre's fortune, the remote and immediate causes of the illness and death of his uncle, the late Lord Hexham; the extent of the family property—and of its disposal, by will, or by entail.

Mrs. Plummer knew more, or said she knew more, of the matter than any one. In vain did Mr. Rowley systematically correct her statements. She had one unanswerable argument to bring forward in support of each assertion, namely, that she had known the facts in detail before any body else. In vain did the party look incredulous and inattentive; Mrs. Plummer had obtained, for a few minutes, what they call in the Congress, "possession of the floor," and would soon have driven her audience from the room, had not the subject of her gossip been of sufficient interest to induce others to follow her information with a few remarks of their own.

"I never could give myself the trouble of getting on with him," said Saville.

"Nor I," said the elder Miss Ashby. "I believe he rather gives himself airs, and expects people to pay court to him."

"No wonder then, my dear, that *you* should never have made much acquaintance with him," remarked Mrs. Ashby, who had entered the room during the discussion.

"You know," she continued, addressing herself principally to John Molesworth, "I am always obliged to lecture down that proud spirit of Julia's. If she thinks a man is *recherché* in society, she would be hardly civil to him, or even drop his acquaintance, I believe, lest the man himself—or the world—or somebody—or nobody—should suspect her of following the fashion."

"But, mamma, Mr. Dacre is not agreeable," interrupted Cecilia.

"For shame, my dear!" said she, looking round to the sofa where sat her second daughter, and where reclined Mr. Saville; "you are too fastidious about people being agreeable. It is not a good plan to judge every one by too high a standard."

The girls bore this lecture with true filial respect, and, ere they could defend themselves from the heavy charges thus proffered against them, Mrs. Ashby wound up her maternal strictures by adding, "Really it is lucky for me that I don't want to get rid of you two young ladies" (and she laughed as good-humouredly as if it had been true); "for though I hate fashion-hunting, and have a sad weakness for an agreeable man (even, I am ashamed to say, should he be the tenth son of a poor curate); yet you girls carry your fastidiousness so far, that you must make up your minds to live and die, *Mrs. Julia* and *Mrs. Cecilia*:" and here they all laughed, and acquiesced with all the good-humour and complacency which their intimate conviction of the impossibility of such a contingency could inspire. John looked as if he thought that Mrs. Ashby did her daughters the greatest injustice, and, without vouchsafing any observations, left the room.

"I am quite glad," continued Mrs. Ashby, that Mr. Dacre is coming here; for I am determined now to judge for myself. You two have given me quite a feeling against

him, and I really think it is very wrong to indulge in those sort of prejudices."

"There is no doubt of his having plenty to say for himself," rejoined Saville, "when he chooses to say it, though I never heard him. It is not in my line to give myself trouble for any man. It is as much as one can do to meet a woman half way, and more than one often does."

"Well," said Mrs. Plummer, "I had heard that Mr. Dacre did hold himself rather high; but I am happy to tell you, Mr. Saville, that I understand, from undoubted authority, that he is as kind and condescending to his inferiors as if they were his equals."

"Do you speak from experience?" inquired Saville, in a listless tone, and looking significantly at Miss Cecilia, to be sure that the point of his impertinence was not entirely thrown away.

"No!" replied the unconscious Mrs. Plummer, "I am sorry to say I have not seen him since he was a boy of sixteen, when all that unfortunate story came out."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Plummer," said Mr. Rowley; "Dacre was then eighteen."

"You will excuse me, Mr. Rowley, but I am not likely to be mistaken, considering that I know his age from his own nurse's sister, who happens to live with a niece of mine; and nobody is likely to forget the year in which he came home, poor boy—the year of the comet, and when the mill-dam at Pipe broke down, and Sir Richard Coulson's carriage horse was stolen. Indeed, I may say that nobody knew so much of the family at that time as myself. But to return to what I was saying, Mr. Saville; I understand from the medical gentleman who attended poor Lord Hexham, that Mr. Dacre's kindness and generosity——"

But Mr. Saville had no intention of encouraging Mrs. Plummer in any further conversation, and, having no particular inclination to listen to her praises of Dacre, he affected not to perceive that he was addressed. The hour furnished a plea to brake up the conelave, and the subject of their discourse was thus for the present spared all further discussion on his character.

## CHAPTER II.

His manner was, perhaps, the more seductive,  
 Because he ne'er seem'd anxious to seduce;  
 Nothing affected, studied, or constructive  
 Of coxcombry or conquest; no abuse  
 Of his attractions marr'd the fair perspective,  
 To indicate a Cupidon broke loose,  
 And seem to say, "Resist us, if you can,"  
 Which makes a dandy, while it spoils a man."

BYRON.

THE dinner hour approached, and Mrs. Plummer was soon re-seated in the drawing-room. Her toilette had been accomplished with the greatest haste, in order that she might steal a march upon the others; for, should fortune favour her so far as to make the new-comer punctual, she hoped to have thus actually re-established a former intimacy, ere the rest of the company had had time to commence their first acquaintance. At length the door opened, and she started from her seat to welcome the wished-for guest; when, to her vexation, she perceived her solitude was interrupted only by the entrance of Mr. Rowley. Mrs. Plummer was not sufficiently sure of being remembered, to wish for witnesses at the expected meeting, and Mr. Rowley was the last person she would have selected as a spectator to any failure she might wish to conceal. Mr. Rowley's presence always made her uneasy—"He is such a talker," as she never failed to remark when he had left the room; "I don't like to hear people pretending to know everything about every body in the world."

Francis Dacre next appeared. He had been apprised by his friend Harry Molesworth that his acquaintance would be claimed by Mrs. Plummer: he had really not forgotten her; and they met with the mutual cordiality of former acquaintance. The rest of the party now fast assembled; introductions were made, and acquaintances re-

newed. Mrs. Ashby bowed graciously—her daughters curtsied coldly. Mary Bingley had tendered her hand with a warmth that had struggled successfully with her habitual shyness, and which confirmed the Misses Ashby in their bad opinion of her manner. The dinner was announced; and Francis Dacre soon found himself seated between Mrs. Molesworth and Mrs. Ashby.

Mrs. Molesworth's conversational powers were small. From the time of her marriage, she had, rather from inclination than from any other cause, resided principally in the country. Her circle of friends was soon narrowed into that of her immediate neighbours. Her correspondents gradually dropped off, and she was left the more uninterruptedly to follow the natural bent of her inclination, and to fuss with unremitting diligence over all the petty cares and arrangements that now occupied her attention. Her most intellectual conversation soon became a conference with the village doctor, upon nostrums for "teething," and preventives against infection; but, happily, her infants were strong, and their teeth came not the worse for the pain they had been made to endure for their relief; and, in spite of their mother's care and camphor, they caught all the complaints that children do catch, and survived all the remedies that were practised upon them.

Poor Mrs. Molesworth—she had much to endure! Mr. Molesworth insisted upon sending the boys to a public school; and many a sleepless night did it cost the anxious mother, as she thought upon the unwholesomeness of excessive study, the cruelty of ushers, and the tyranny of the upper forms.

Other trials came; and many who expected Mrs. Molesworth's alarms to increase in proportion to the reality of their cause, feared she would never survive the anxiety that must be kept so painfully on the stretch, by the tastes which riper years developed in her boys. John became a sportsman, and Harry insisted upon going to sea. Mrs. Molesworth remonstrated upon the pleasures of her first-born and the chosen profession of the second; but for both they received the paternal sanction.

"John has got nothing else to do," argued Mr. Molesworth. "You thought they would both be killed by going to school, and yet they are none the worse for it."

"There, my dear, I, alas! differ from you," said Mrs.

Molesworth, with a sigh. "If Harry had not been sent to school, we might have prevented his intimacy with Dacre; and it is he, I am convinced, who has drawn my dear boy into this shocking mania for the sea. During the last holidays, what should I find among his books, but a present from Dacre of 'Southey's Life of Nelson?' I understand there never was a more dangerous book; they say it has tempted more promising boys to go to sea than all the voyages ever written—and they are all bad enough."

But Mr. Molesworth was firm about his sons; declared hunting was necessary to health, and the yellow admirals the longest-lived men in the kingdom. Nor did Mrs. Molesworth's health and happiness sink under these trials, as might have been expected. Her utmost powers of apprehension had been for many years excited upon small and groundless causes. It was not in the power of mortal woman to have been more uneasy than she had repeatedly been from the apprehensions of her own imagination. Reality could do no more; for she had suffered her worst about nothing.

She had happily now two fresh objects, for whom she could indulge in all her wonted apprehensions, without Mr. Molesworth's too frequent interference. Her orphan relative, Mary Bingley, who had been under her guardianship from her earliest infancy; and Dash, the faithful companion of Harry, was confided to her care when he went to sea: on these two beings, Mrs. Molesworth lavished the attentions she had formerly devoted to the service of her offspring. These amiable cares did not, however, render Mrs. Molesworth an agreeable member of society, or an amusing neighbour at dinner. The task of entertaining Mr. Dacre, upon the present occasion, devolved, therefore, with little interruption, upon Mrs. Ashby.

Mrs. Ashby was one of those persons whom the world, with laudable candour, designates as a worldly minded woman. Her objects were worldly, and equally so were her means to their attainment. To the world she sacrificed, and from the world she hoped for reward. She had laid, in the days of her youth, a successful siege to, not the heart, but the hand and purse, of her late husband. They had never known the blessings of domestic happiness, but they had always treated each other with civility; and as

no glaringly bad result had ensued from this prudent match, her good opinion of "*mariages de convenance*," was confirmed by experience.

She was by nature indolent, and careless of expense : but an increasing desire that her daughters should be early and brilliantly established in matrimony overcame the first ; and a small jointure, which required the utmost pinching in ordinary comforts to purchase a little occasional show, perpetually thwarted her inclination to the second. To keep up a good appearance was the ruling maxim of her life. Upon this precept were formed the principles, tastes, and opinions of her daughters ; and they learnt, therefore, to be satisfied with appearances, and indifferent to realities.

There was no natural disposition to immorality in Mrs. Ashby, but there was no severe predilection in favour of morality. She had always certain ends in view ; and for their attainment she laboured, without permitting the intrusion of minor scruples. Had Mrs. Ashby been really clever, she would probably have succeeded earlier in her matrimonial speculations ; but, although her abilities were not always equal to her designs, still, perseverance effected much. In angling for a husband, she caught a partner for the dance ; and secured at least an invitation to dinner, where she hoped to make a *séjour*, in the country.

It is not to be supposed that the opportunity now offered for monopolising the attention of a young man of Mr. Dacre's position in society, was neglected by so prudent a person as the lady in question. Mrs. Molesworth, too happy to be released from the troublesome necessity of taking her part in conversation, was well pleased that Mrs. Ashby could talk enough for two, and remained a silent observer of the well-satisfied looks of her guests.

The latest arrival at a country house generally furnishes an interesting topic of conversation to the rest of the party ; and so soon as the ladies retired from the dining-room, they instantly conferred upon Mr. Dacre the honours of that full discussion which is usually allotted in such cases.

Mrs. Ashby, regardless of his position in society, and in high-minded defiance of a sneering world, pursued what she thought "a great policy ;" threw over him the broad shield of her protection ; and boldly maintained that what-

ever her fastidious girls might say, he was "really a very charming person." The fastidious girls, with sundry smiles and exclamations, and bridlings and noddings, said and unsaid a great deal of delicately mingled praise and censure, which while it supported the credit of their difficulty to be pleased, advanced no full-fledged opinion which malice could retail, and just left his character where they found it.

Mrs. Plummer dealt more with the past than with the present. She was full of recollections, and gave an historical sketch of his progress through every interesting change of habiliments, from nankeen frocks to a frock coat.

Mrs. Molesworth said little, but her praise was sincere, discriminating, and founded on observation. She had been struck and touched by the benevolent care with which he avoided treading upon her dingy fat lapdog, who was scarcely distinguishable from the colour of the hearth-rug.

He had in truth, won golden opinions from all—even from those who seemed to accord their praises grudgingly. He had conquered as much as it is given to the heroes of the limited modern standard of perfection to conquer in the brief course of one single evening.

The morrow came, and Dacre still advanced in the estimation of the inmates of Thornberry Park. In one way or other he had gained the good will and good opinion of all. He had proved himself to be the best shot of the party—and was contented with such sport as the place afforded. He had listened with praiseworthy patience to Mr. Molesworth's minute descriptions of his improvements, whether made or projected. He was no interruption to Mrs. Molesworth's daily state of passive inanity. He had treated Mrs. Plummer with a civility from which her well-known tediousness often excluded her. He made no attempt to repress the familiarity with which his acquaintance was rather claimed than sought by George Saville. He bestowed a well-bred attention on the vocal performances of the Misses Ashby; and Henry Molesworth had the pleasure of hearing from Mary Bingley, that the merits of his friend were duly appreciated.

Dacre had come determined to please and to be pleased. Between Harry and himself, uninterrupted friendship had subsisted from childhood. The Molesworths, too, had



been neighbours of his deceased uncle, and had been disinterestedly attentive to Lord Hexham in his state of melancholy loneliness. Dacre, therefore, felt doubly anxious to conciliate their good-will. He was well aware that, in the habits and manners of the house of Molesworth, he was not likely to find much attractive refinement; but he was equally confident that, in the friends of his uncle, and in the family of Harry, he could never be offended by false pretensions, unworthy servility, or those petty feelings that are the unfailing offspring of vulgarity of mind.

One endowed with powers far inferior to those possessed by Dacre, might, perhaps, without effort, have insured approbation amongst people whom experience had not rendered fastidious. Nor did he attempt to win his way by effort: his intercourse with the world had taught him to be courteous, without condescension—respectful, without obsequiousness—and easy, without familiarity. He knew how readily the stigma of pride and conceit is attached, by those who live in comparative seclusion, to any on whom habit, position, or the voice of the public have fixed the reputation of fashion; and he therefore entered the gates of Thornberry Park, with a determination to preserve a gentlemanlike avoidance of manner and topics that could risk making apparent his sense, either of rusticity on their part, or of superiority on his own.

"I hear London is a perfect desert now," said Mrs. Ashby.

"I think," replied Dacre, smiling, "a real desert would be surprised at the comparison."

"You forget," said Mrs. Plummer, edging up to the side where conversation seemed likely to flourish; "you forget, my dear Mrs. Ashby, that my old friend here has been a great traveller by land and by sea, and that he can tell us what a real desert is."

Mrs. Ashby took no notice, and fearing Mr. Dacre should be guilty of the unnecessary civility of attending to her, quickly turned away, and continued as though unconscious of the loquacious Mrs. Plummer's remarks.

"Will London begin early this year?"

"I fear," said Dacre, still wishing to ward off the one great topic of the Ashbys, "I am the last person likely to know, for I am neither in the secrets of the Premier or the

Patronesses; and upon Parliament or Almack's depend what people mean by the 'London season.'"

"Julia, when did Lady Stourbridge say she should begin her Fridays? I gave her your letter this morning."

Mrs. Ashby did not care so much for the date, as to let the company know she had heard from Lady Stourbridge.

"Really, mamma, I forget—much too soon, I dare say. How one dreads," continued Miss Ashby to Mr. Dacre, "the recommencement of a London campaign! Society might be very well in a quiet way, but nothing is so wearisome as the *grand-monde*."

"I am glad, then, for the sake of others, that Miss Ashby is not wont to betray that feeling in her countenance," replied Dacre, in a tone that implied a well deserved compliment on her pretty inexpressive face.

"I fear, then, that I am a sad hypocrite," retorted Julia, with a look of self complacency that showed she fully understood—almost more than fully understood—his meaning.

"I really believe you must," said the ever pertinacious Mrs. Plummer, "you have quite taken me in, for I never should have guessed you to be a stay-at-home person."

"But Miss Ashby did not announce herself to be quite such a heretic as to profess a preference for home. She has gone no further than to confess that crowds afford her no amusement," rejoined Dacre.

"If so, poor girl! she is very ill used," thought John Molesworth, who stood by, listening.

"I must say for the young people of this day, that they are much quieter, and more domestic, than they were in my time," said Mrs. Ashby. "It surprises me sometimes, but I grant it is an improvement," continued she, addressing Dacre, in order to see whether he looked approvingly of domestic women. "I believe Julia would never care to set foot in a ball-room again; am I not right, my love?"

"Can it be really true, Miss Ashby, that you meditate so severe a blow to the dancing interest! What! abjure all balls! Remember there is a great variety to be found between the full-dress ball, and a carpet hop."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed George Saville, as he joined the party, "surely your conscience is not burthened

with the horrors of such Goth-like diversions as carpet hops?"

"I cannot honestly deny the guilt of such a misdemeanour," rejoined Dacre.

"Ah! I understand—a case of filial obedience—ordered, I suppose, to increase the crowd of the over-crammed rooms of some friend of your mother's."

Dacre made no reply, but turning quickly towards Saville, there shot from his eyes a look of such piercing inquiry, as might have disconcerted its object, had he not at that instant been diligently employed in removing some imperceptible dust from the surface of his shoes. Dacre's look, however, did not escape the notice of Miss Ashby; and perceiving that Mr. Saville's observations had, from some cause, proved unwelcome, she left the labour of smiling at this sally, to her sister; and looking languidly up at Dacre, as if the very recollection of a ball fatigued her, said, "Now, is not Almack's the most horrid place in the world? I really wonder how so many people can be found to annoy themselves by going there! to me it is quite intolerable."

John Molesworth raised his eyebrows, and, with a look of unceremonious surprise, said, somewhat abruptly,—  
"You are all riddles to me, Miss Ashby! I see your names as being present at parties in every newspaper I take up; and, by the by, I remember calling one morning in town, where tickets were not forthcoming, fancying you were disappointed, and offering to ride all over London to repair the mischief. How you must have hated me for my officiousness."

John Molesworth was not cultivated or refined, but he was shrewd and observant, had some humour, and held in honest aversion every species of what he called "humbug." It was a circumstance of no unfrequent occurrence for their annual guests, the Ashbys, to be reminded of his prejudices on that subject; but both mother and daughters were of forgiving dispositions—particularly to the first-born of the land; so he was only called "odd," and "original," or "very droll," and "wanting in manner," when he spoke the truth too plainly.

"Now, I declare, Mr. Molesworth, you shall be punished by a long explanatory story, for supposing that we were not really obliged for your good nature about those

foolish tickets," said Mrs. Ashby, drawing her chair towards him, and thereby making a judicious separation between themselves and the rest of the party, as though her communication was meant only for his ear, but in reality to prevent the recurrence of similar recollections and observations in the hearing of Dacre.

By this little move, a chair was released, and Mrs. Ashby was well pleased to see that Mr. Dacre availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded of seating himself by the side of her daughter.

"How provokingly reserved you are!" said Julia, in a tone that invited discussion; "one never can make out your real opinions."

"Their concealment is not intentional, I assure you," replied Dacre; "they are too unimportant to be worth a mystery."

"That is at least a modest confession on your part; but though it may be very proper for you to suppose that no one cares to hear your opinions, I really am anxious to know what you think of the London world."

"I am afraid," said Dacre, "you would hardly have patience to hear all I think on such a subject."

"But tell me in a few words."

"Really," pursued he, "that would be almost as difficult as I once found it to answer an acquaintance of mine, who asked me what would be the price of a picture. Remember what a world of variety it is."

"Well! you do surprise me," replied the exclusive Miss Ashby; "for I think there is such a sameness in town—one always sees the same people night after night, and one always goes to the same houses."

"But you must allow that this monotony of place and person, of which you complain, is not one of the necessary evils attendant on London society."

"Indeed, it appears to me to be quite unavoidable; for," added she, with a look that was meant to be particularly sensible, "we, of course, never think of accepting invitations to any but the best places. Mamma has, very properly, always objected to such a complete waste of time as that would be."

"As nothing can be better than the best, to dispute the wisdom of that rule will sound very paradoxical," replied Dacre; "but to me, I confess there is a charm in variety;

I had rather take my chance for amusement by ranging over this large library, and selecting for myself, than be condemned for life to the perusal of one small shelf of even the best written books in the language."

Miss Ashby, whose liveliness of manner exceeded her quickness of comprehension, did not fully understand the meaning of Mr. Dacre's last observation; but she smiled, and removed the ringlets from her forehead, just to fill up time, and then said, in an insinuating tone that must be safe whatever he might have meant,—“I suspect you are a very odd person!”

“Am I flattered or accused by that suspicion?” rejoined Dacre, who was rather amused at this sudden digression.

“That you can best tell: some people, you know, like to be odd.”

“I have no predilection in favour of oddity.”

“You acknowledge yourself fond of variety, so you must like change;—in short, I suppose you are what is called an uncertain person.” Miss Ashby, who felt the necessity, rather than the power, to keep up what she had intended to be a judicious mixture of flattery and banter, was a little embarrassed at perceiving that Dacre looked more surprised than pleased by this doubtful compliment. “Now, don’t pretend not to understand me,” she continued, with rather a forced laugh, “for you must have been told the same thing often enough before now—you must know that every body says you are very singular, very—I hardly know what to call it, if I may not say uncertain—very different sometimes from what you are at others.”

“Capricious,” replied Dacre, “is the word, I believe, which best expresses your meaning; and,” he added in a tone of pique, “it is so very flattering that every body should take the trouble of passing sentence on my character, that it would be quite unreasonable in me to question its justice. I should have thought myself utterly unworthy the high distinction of being put on my trial when absent.”

“What a shocking propensity you have to undervalue yourself. I have heard you talked over a hundred times: I really felt I knew you thoroughly, though we had never exchanged a word till you came here.”

“I am sorry you should have been so prejudiced against

me, before we had the pleasure of being acquainted," replied Dacre, coldly.

"Indeed, you are quite mistaken there," said Miss Ashby; "for the very last time you were discussed was at a small party—just ourselves, and a few other intimates, at Lady Kendal's, where you had such a champion!"

"Indeed!" replied Dacre, with a countenance that betrayed some interest in her communication.

Miss Ashby felt satisfied that she had now regained the high road to his attention, and added, with more vivacity than discretion,—“I never heard a better defence.”

“Surely, then, you will tell me to whom I am indebted.”

“Now I have a great mind to torment you, for I see you are curious.”

“You know it would be ungrateful in me to be indifferent, considering how much I probably owed to my solitary defender.”

“You must guess, then,” said she, with an archness that was not in accordance with his feelings. “I have given you a clue, by saying where I heard it.”

“Could it be Lady Kendal herself?” enquired he, eagerly.

“Oh, no! she was not your friend; but,” continued she, significantly, “it was a person who is seldom absent from her house.”

“I cannot guess—do, pray, tell me,” said Dacre in a tone that, to one better read in the book of nature than the fair Julia, would have betrayed more than mere curiosity.

“You are provokingly impatient; but if you won't guess, I will tell you that your defender was no other than Sir Edward Bradford.” Dacre's countenance changed—the colour rose for a moment to his cheek; and, with a look of mortification that clouded the expression of his features, he said drily,—“It was very obliging in Sir Edward to undertake so arduous a task:” and turning hastily round as if seeking some pretence to avoid any rejoinder from Miss Ashby, he gladly availed himself of the entrance of Mary Bingley to ask her to repeat a song he had admired the evening before.

The abrupt termination of Dacre's conversation with Julia had not escaped the observation of Mrs. Ashby. She felt too much confidence in her daughter's laudable

desire to please, to be under any uneasiness upon that score, but she was anxious to know the cause ; and upon receiving, when they retired at night, a faithful report of all that had passed, she saw no reason to apprehend the annihilation of her quickly formed hopes, that she might find in Dacre an admirer for her daughter. She just admonished her to substitute, in future, the word eulogium for defence, it having occurred to her that Mr. Dacre might not have quite relished the idea of being supposed to need a defender ; and she could imagine no other cause for his so unaccountably preferring to listen to an air sung by Miss Bingley, to a continuance with Julia of what she was pleased to term rational conversation.

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### CHAP. III.

“The worst fault you have is to be in love.”

“’Tis a fault I will not change for your best virtue.”

*As You Like It.*

Whairfore sou’d ye tauk o’ love,  
 Unless it be to pain us ?  
 Oh, whairfore sou’d ye tauk o’ love,  
 When ye say the sea maun twain us ?

Will it be time to praise this cheek  
 When years and tears have blencht it ?  
 Will it be time to tauk o’ love  
 When cauld and care have quenchit it ?

*Scotch Ballad.*

For the better understanding of Mr. Dacre’s feelings and character, the reader shall be made acquainted with the principal circumstances of his life previous to his visit to Thornberry Park.

Francis Dacre was the only son of Major Dacre, the younger brother of the late Lord Hexham. Major Dacre had early in life entered the army,—a profession wel

suited to his disposition, and calculated to call forth the qualities of zeal, activity, and courage, by which he was distinguished. He was cheerful, intelligent, and prepossessing, and, therefore, naturally a favourite in society; but his judgment was weak, his passions strong, and he was guided too often by the feeling of the moment rather than by the dictates of principle. Though he was capable of warm attachment, and had cultivated those best affections which cling round home and its inmates, he was jealous of interference even from them; and, like many men of weak judgment, he was the pertinacious maintainer of hasty opinions—fearful of being led by others, he became a ready slave to his own prejudices. His was a character peculiarly formed to render him an object alike of affection and anxiety to all who were really interested in his behalf.

Nearly two years previous to the birth of our hero, Major Dacre joined his regiment, then engaged on foreign service; and it was not long after he quitted England that Lord Hexham received the painful intelligence of a circumstance that roused at once his anger and his sorrow. Upon his arrival at the town of —, Major Dacre was billeted upon a family where he was received unwillingly, and treated with as little hospitality as might be expected from those who, without sympathy in the cause which brought a stranger to their land, were compulsorily obliged to receive him as a guest. To the kindness of one individual only was he indebted for such comforts as he enjoyed, and that individual was she, on whose account it was deemed by the family peculiarly advisable to avoid all such intercourse as could lead to intimacy. Isabella (for such was her name) had been brought up strictly, rather than judiciously, by the uncle and aunt, with whom she had resided from her infancy. They had, it is true, secured a never failing obedience to their commands—but it was the obedience of habitual fear. To the deference which love or gratitude inspire, she was a stranger. At the time when Major Dacre became an inmate of the house, Isabella had attained her seventeenth year. The denial of kindness had rendered her acutely sensitive to the feelings and wishes of others, and it grieved her to see the undisguised manner in which her relatives availed themselves of daily opportunities to show that his presence was



felt as an intrusion. She sought frequent occasion to atone for their neglect, and the young officer soon found himself the object of kindly solicitude to a very lovely and interesting girl.

Such a position was a sure prelude to attachment. An understanding between them soon arose—an understanding not expressed in words—and having, for the world, no voice; yet silently and unconsciously encouraged in that mute language of look and manner which is clearly intelligible to the quickened perceptions of mutual love.

To Isabella, love was a spring of thought and action hitherto unknown; her early years had been uncheered by parental affection—to love and be beloved had, with her, existed only in imagination. It was an idea which the longings of a tender heart had suggested to her fancy, but it was now for the first time that the overwhelming reality rushed upon her, with all the additional force of novelty and surprise. Memory supplied no standard by which she could try her present feelings; she lived as in a day-dream of delight. She feared nothing from the sudden change that had been effected in her sentiments and character. Fear was associated in her mind with the by-gone days of sorrow and indifference, and she ceased to apprehend when happiness burst upon her.

It was not so with Major Dacre:—the more he became alive to the mutual and increasing attachment that had arisen between himself and Isabella, the more sensibly did he feel the embarrassment of his position, the more clearly did he see the difficulties and dangers which must attend the indulgence of such a passion.

Isabella, though respectably connected, was still, in point of birth, inferior to himself; portionless, a foreigner, and untutored in the ways of the world. She was ignorant of the habits of his country, and every rule of conduct that experience would teach to fit her for a life of certain privation, and possible temptation. To marry her would be the height of imprudence: to be the betrayer of one so young, so devoted, so confiding, would be a baseness from which he recoiled. A thousand resolutions were daily made, in her absence, to resist a fascination which thus presented to his better judgment such a vista of disappointment and misery; and as often were those resolutions abandoned when his senses were again beguiled by her

presence. Her charms had enchained him, but he felt no happiness: he knew that poison lurked beneath the cup of seeming bliss; and he inwardly dreaded the period when she, too, would awake to the knowledge of their real position.

At length his regiment received orders to quit their present quarters, and to proceed by slow and regular marches to ——. He delayed to the last possible moment announcing to Isabella the melancholy tidings, that the hour of separation was at hand.

It was in one of those stolen interviews, in which, so fatally to their peace, they had habitually indulged, that she learnt the sad intelligence of the morrow being fixed for the day of her lover's departure. It was a stunning blow, and for awhile the consternation of surprise and grief seemed to overpower her senses. Overcome by this undisguised demonstration of her attachment, and by the prospect of their fast approaching separation, he could no longer refrain from the expression of his passion; and Isabella was first aroused from a state of apparent insensibility by the words of love and sympathy that now burst from the lips of her admirer. This avowal of his feelings restored her to calmness, if not to happiness: a deep silence ensued, as if each feared that utterance would destroy the delusive repose which had thus succeeded to the impassioned declaration of mutual affection.

The sound of footsteps first aroused them to the recollection that their interview had already been prolonged beyond its usual duration, and that its further continuance must be attended by the danger of discovery. With the tone of one who was about to part from all he held most dear, Dacre prepared to take his leave.

"Not yet," interposed Isabella; and then, with a firmness of voice and manner which he had never witnessed before, and least expected to see at such a moment, she emphatically added, "We must meet again: this need not be our last farewell."

The morrow came, and Major Dacre repaired early to the spot where the interview of the preceding evening had been held, in the hope of meeting Isabella; but she was not there. He sought her elsewhere; but in vain. He feared that the apprehension of discovery might have prevented her from seeking the hoped-for meeting. The ap-

pointed hour of his departure was at hand, and in breathless anxiety he listened for the sound of her voice, and the light tread of her foot; but all was silent.

Tormenting doubts occurred to him: she might have wished to avoid the risk of another interview, or the trial of a last parting. She might have been prompted by the most commendable feelings to wish to see him no more: for "what," he asked himself in the bitterness of self-reproach, "had he ever allowed himself to say which should inspire on her part confidence in him?"

With inward anxiety, but outward calmness, he returned to the apartment where he learnt that the rest of the family had assembled to survey the busy scene now presented in the streets, by the removal of the troops. His first quick glance at the group told him that Isabella alone was missing. It was an anxious moment, and the more painful because it was necessary that he should assume an air of calmness and indifference; and though burning to know the cause of her absence, he waited awhile with apparent tranquillity, and then asked carelessly where she was.

Till then, her absence had been unperceived, but the attention of the party was awakened to the fact by this inquiry; and they remembered that Isabella had not been seen by them that morning: others were questioned—none had seen her. The alarm soon spread throughout the household. They searched long and anxiously; but in vain. She was nowhere to be found.

Scarcely had the alarm become general, and the apprehension that she was lost dreadfully confirmed by the fruitless endeavours to find her, than a command to Major Dacre from his superior officer, obliged him instantly to join his troop. To quit, without a moment's delay, a scene so filled with agonizing doubts and painful recollections as that from which he was now called, was an awful trial; but his duty as a soldier precluded all choice, and he rushed from the house in obedience to the summons, with the reckless desperation of hopeless misery.

It is needless to describe the melancholy forebodings and bitter self-reproaches which oppressed the mind of Major Dacre, as his thoughts for ever dwelt on the lost image of Isabella. He repented alike his self-indulgence in having yielded to a fascination that could not lead, ultimately, to the happiness of either; and for the selfish

prudence that had withheld the offer of his hand from accompanying the open declaration of his attachment.

Not many months subsequent to this period, Major Dacre received, with pain and surprise, a letter from Lord Hexham, filled with the strongest animadversions upon his conduct, relative to circumstances with which he had believed him wholly unacquainted.

Lord Hexham was many years senior to his brother. He was one to whom a compromise between duty and inclination was unknown, and whose principles and irreproachable life rendered him, deservedly, an object of respect: but strong in the conscious rectitude of intention by which he himself was guided, he was regarded by some as prone to censure too severely the weakness or frailties of others.

It had reached his ears that Major Dacre had not only formed an unfortunate attachment, but that, since his departure from the town of —, he had been secretly accompanied by the person who was its object. His informant added that the most inviolable secrecy having been preserved, both as to the name and history of the lady, accident alone brought to his knowledge either her existence or her connection with Major Dacre, and he could give no further information on the subject.

The difference of age between the two brothers, and the early succession of Lord Hexham to his property, had placed him in a situation which, whilst it increased his fraternal interest in the welfare of his younger brother, had also accustomed him, too frequently, to the exercise of paternal authority for him to hesitate in the expression of his unequivocal condemnation of such conduct as now called forth his displeasure.

Under feelings of irritation, and without waiting for further information, he instantly wrote to Major Dacre, upbraiding him with the circumstance that had reached his knowledge, in terms that were little calculated to produce explanation or repentance; and, while he bitterly reproached him with being either the dupe of artifice, or the ungenerous destroyer of another's innocence, he warned him of the consequences that would attend his marriage with any person who would be regarded as unworthy of the family to which he belonged.

True it was, that long ere the receipt of this letter, Isabella had become the clandestine companion of Major

Dacre ; true, that apprehensive lest any clue to the place or object of her flight should be traced by those she had left, her name and situation had been most carefully and successfully concealed.

To remain in a home that had owed its only happiness to the lover that was departed—to be again condemned to breathe nought but that chilling atmosphere of cheerless indifference with which she should now be surrounded—to look only upon those whom she feared, and yet to know that she was beloved by him for whom life itself would have seemed no sacrifice, and that he was still within her reach, proved a sore temptation to one who loved “not wisely, but too well.” The dictates of passion were blindly obeyed, and she sought refuge from her hated abode by throwing herself at once upon the protection of Major Dacre.

The answer received by Lord Hexham to his ill-judged epistle, though in reality such as might have been expected from one of Major Dacre’s temperament and character, surprised and offended him in the highest degree ; and the result of this correspondence was so decided a disagreement, as caused, for a while, a suspension of all further intercourse between the two brothers.

In time, this unnatural estrangement became too painful for longer endurance ; and though pride forbade concessions on either part, letters were again exchanged : but the confidence of former days was not restored, and from all allusion to the subject of their unhappy difference each carefully abstained.

Major Dacre’s regiment remained long on foreign service ; and four years had now elapsed since Lord Hexham had been first apprized of the fact which occasioned their quarrel. From that time he had remained in ignorance of all that regarded the fate of his brother’s companion. Though annoyed by the persevering silence of Major Dacre on this subject, Lord Hexham sought not to learn from others what his brother had chosen to conceal. He knew by experience, that remonstrance would be useless, and he scrupulously avoided prying into the secrets of one, who purposely withheld from him his confidence, and by whom, it was probable, his advice would be rejected.

Time strengthens the barrier which reserve has erected ;

and the difficulty of communication (often at first so easy to be overcome) is formed by delay into an obstacle of almost unconquerable power. So was it with Major Dacre, and so might it long have continued, had not the hand of the destroying angel scattered the vain erections of pride, and subdued, with one fell stroke, the remembrance of every feeling save that of grief for the loss of her he mourned.

A short illness, produced by the extreme hardships to which she had been unavoidably exposed, had terminated the life of Isabella. In the hour of desolation that succeeded her death, he clung with affection and sadness to the recollection of his youth; his heart now yearned for the sympathy of those he had loved, and the ties of kindred pressed their claims with new force upon his mind. He wrote to his brother: and in the heart-broken confessions of misery contained in that letter for the loss of a wife, Lord Hexham received his first intimation of the actual marriage of Major Dacre.

By the decease of Isabella, the sole care of an only child devolved upon the surviving parent; and this circumstance determined Major Dacre to effect an exchange, whenever an opportunity should offer of doing so with honour, that he might return to England with his infant son. But difficulties arose in making the desired arrangement, and another year had elapsed before Lord Hexham received the joyful intelligence of the period being fixed for his brother to set out on his homeward journey.

The probable time of his arrival had almost passed, when unhappily his name appeared in the Gazette, under the head of "severely wounded." An unexpected attack had been made by the enemy, a few days previous to his intended departure: a general engagement had ensued, and at the close of the day, this gallant officer received a wound in his breast, and was carried senseless from the field of battle. The ball was extracted; and the wound, though severe, was not considered mortal.

For a short time he patiently submitted to the treatment deemed necessary to his recovery, but with the first return of strength, he became weary of medical restraint, and impatient to return to England. In vain was he assured of the risk that would attend his too speedy removal. His

military duty was at an end: his thoughts were turned towards home, and deaf to all counsel but the dictates of his wishes, he sought his child in the convent where he had been placed for safety, and hastily pursued his journey northward.

He had written the day before his departure, to apprise Lord Hexham of his intention to return immediately: the next letter received by him from Major Dacre was to announce his arrival at the sea-port from which he had intended to embark for England, and where he was now detained by illness. The hand-writing was much altered, and the desponding expressions of the few sentences that composed his letter, awakened such serious apprehensions in Lord Hexham's mind, that he lost no time in leaving England to join his brother, and to satisfy his anxiety respecting his real estate.

His alarms proved but too well founded. Major Dacre had been sinking fast ere his arrival, and though for a moment revived by the unexpected happiness of once more beholding his brother, all hope of recovery was past. He had, indeed, scarcely accomplished the half of his journey, when he became painfully sensible that his strength was not equal to the task he had to perform; but having already proceeded too far to gain much by return, and urged by the fear of being detained on the road, he pressed forward with renewed despatch, hoping that by thus shortening the time of exertion, he might still have vigour sufficient to support him through the fatigues of the remainder. But in this hope he miscalculated the powers of his exhausted frame; and though arrived at the port from which he was to sail, he found himself quite unable to attempt the passage. Conscious of his own rapid decline, his anxiety hourly increased to reach England. He ardently desired to look again on those dear inmates of his former home, whom time had still spared, and to consign to their hands the care of his only child; but this anxiety served only to augment the fever that had long preyed upon his enfeebled body, and to hasten the moment that must terminate his existence.

The presence of Lord Hexham, and his affectionate assurances of protection to the little Francis, tended greatly to relieve his mind; and desirous to relate to his brother those circumstances connected with the fate of the unfor-

fortunate Isabella, with which he believed him unacquainted, he summoned resolution sufficient to allude to the severe affliction he had sustained in her loss. In spite of his endeavours to be composed, it was evident to Lord Hexham that the subject was of too agitating a nature to be discussed without danger to one in so very precarious a state; therefore, earnestly beseeching him to postpone for the present any further conversation on that topic, he availed himself of the first opportunity to quit the apartment, trusting that perfect tranquillity might quiet an excitement so perilous to the sinking patient.

Lord Hexham had not long retired ere he was summoned to the chamber of sickness. The servant whom he had placed in the room during his own short absence ran quickly to inform him that a sudden change had taken place in Major Dacre's appearance, and that his attempts to speak were inarticulate. In a moment Lord Hexham was again by the bed-side of his brother. The dying man made an effort to speak on his approach, and for an instant his features were convulsed by the painful anxiety he displayed to make himself understood; but the power of utterance was gone, and a vacant stare soon succeeded his hopeless attempt to impart his wishes.

It occurred to Lord Hexham that he might possibly have desired once more to gaze upon his child. The terrified boy was quickly placed within his reach upon the bed. He turned his dimmed and glassy eye towards him, and by a slight movement of the lips as he endeavoured to imprint the last kiss upon his cheek, showed that his senses had not yet forsaken him. Lord Hexham affectionately pressed his brother's hand, and repeated his assurances of parental care to his nephew; the pressure was not returned—the hand was already powerless; but his features relaxed into a faint smile, as though he comprehended the meaning of those words. He breathed one heavy sigh—his eyes closed—and in another instant Lord Hexham bent with heartfelt sorrow over the lifeless body of his brother.



## CHAPTER IV.

"Such is the weakness of all mortal hope,  
 So fickle is the state of earthly things,  
 That ere they come into their aimed scope,  
 They fall so short of our frail reckonings;  
 And bring us bale and bitter sorrowings,  
 Instead of comfort which we should embrace.  
 This is the state of Cæsars and of Kings;  
 Let none, therefore, that is in meaner place,  
 To greatly grieve at any his unlucky case."

SPENSER.

MAJOR DACRE had ever been so averse from business, that it afforded no matter of surprise to Lord Hexham to perceive, that among the few scattered papers discovered with his scanty effects, none were found to be of the slightest importance to himself or to his child. There was but little more money than was necessary to the accomplishment of his journey—no letters; and, with the exception of a small trinket containing a lock of black hair, which he habitually wore, not a relic of Isabella was to be seen.

The servant who had accompanied Major Dacre, having been hired only for the occasion, could not be expected to afford much information upon the subject of his late master's property; but suggested, as the readiest means to account for any apparent deficiencies, that part of the baggage belonging to Major Dacre's regiment had been captured by the enemy on the day in which he received his fatal wound. Lord Hexham was much pleased with the zeal with which he volunteered his services to discover, if possible, the truth of this supposition, and at his activity in returning more immediately to head-quarters than was required for the fulfilment of his subsequent engagements, in order that he might have the better chance of gaining the desired information.

Lord Hexham was a widower and a father, but these circumstances were not wanted to awaken his sympathy in the fate of his orphan charge. His affection for his departed brother, not wholly unmixed with self-reproach for their temporary estrangement, and the satisfaction evinced by Major Dacre at his promise of protection, combined with the lively intelligence and endearing disposition displayed by the little Francis, could not fail to secure for him in his uncle the interest and kindness of paternal love.

A few years subsequent to this period, Lord Hexham was visited by a severe affliction in the death of his only son, and to his nephew he now turned with the increased devotion of an undivided affection. Previous to the death of his cousin, Francis Dacre had declared his predilection in favour of the navy, and had obtained his uncle's consent to enter that service. Gladly would he have revoked his consent when by this change in the prospects of his nephew a profession was no longer necessary, and when with a heart half broken by domestic affliction, he fondly clung to the hope of future comfort in the society of his adopted son. Ignorant of these feelings in his uncle, and careless of the advantages to be derived from the prospective change in his worldly condition, young Dacre resisted every covert attempt to dissuade him from his purpose. Lord Hexham might perhaps have been tempted to offer more open and peremptory opposition to the fulfilment of his wishes, had not a painful dilemma arisen about the period when Francis was of an age to enter into his chosen profession, which made him not only scrupulous of thwarting his nephew, but almost disposed him to rejoice at his choice.

The manner in which Major Dacre had alluded to his wife, had left on Lord Hexham's mind no doubt of his brother's marriage; but he was still ignorant of the time and place at which their union had occurred. It was a subject on which hitherto he had felt that inquiry was immaterial; but the death of his son had changed the aspect of affairs, and it now became important to the future prospect of his nephew, to obtain proofs of the fact and period of his parents' marriage.

The regiment to which Major Dacre had belonged, was at this time expected shortly to return; and to the arrival

of his friends and companions, Lord Hexham looked forward with some anxiety, as the readiest means of obtaining the wished-for information. But in this expectation, he was disappointed. In vain he made inquiries of all those who had lived on terms of intimacy with his late brother. Every circumstance connected with the elopement and marriage of Major Dacre and Isabella had been attended with such secrecy, that the subject had remained a mystery even to those with whom he was best acquainted. An impression had existed generally amongst his friends that he was married: but as it was also surmised that he had been accompanied by Isabella for some time previous to their knowledge of her being his companion, they could form no idea of the period of their marriage; and some indiscreet raillery having once nearly produced a serious quarrel, all observation or inquiry had been from that time forward carefully avoided. His most intimate friend had been killed in action. One only servant had attended him from the time he quitted England, till within a year of his return: respecting this man Lord Hexham could obtain no certain information, till on looking over a packet of his brother's letters, he met with one, containing expressions of regret for the loss of this faithful attendant, who had just died after a very short illness.

The difficulty, now apparent, of obtaining such proofs of the legitimacy of Francis Dacre as were requisite for ensuring the succession to his uncle's title, determined Lord Hexham to offer no decided opposition to his entering the profession on which his mind was bent. He was anxious that one so young should be spared the knowledge of those harassing doubts respecting his birth, which Lord Hexham hoped by continued exertion would eventually be dispelled. He dreaded the effects upon his nephew's mind of thus early debasing the memory of his parents, whom Francis had hitherto been taught to cherish and revere. Should his unwearied perseverance be rewarded by success, Francis would have been exposed to unnecessary trials; but if, on the contrary, the search should prove fruitless, or serve only to confirm his fears, he thought it desirable that the years of childhood should have passed, and the character of his nephew be more formed, ere the painful truth was revealed to him.

It was a mournful day to all at Hexham house, when

Francis was summoned to join the ship to which he had been appointed. Daring in spirit, and of a generous, lively, and affectionate disposition, he was the darling of his uncle, and the spoiled child of all the household. There was not one, who had not thanks to mingle with their farewell blessing for some little token of remembrance presented to them by the warm-hearted boy; and when he quitted his home, there were none who did not feel in some degree that cheerless blank, which the absence of a cherished object must ever produce.

To Lord Hexham his loss was indeed severe, it was the loss of that companion who had alone the power to arouse him from the habitual seriousness which his heavy affliction had produced.

The only occupation in which he now felt disposed to engage with feelings of real interest, was the prosecution of that inquiry in which the fate of his nephew was so materially involved. He carefully abstained, however, from mentioning the subject to any but those who were likely to render him assistance, and to them he particularly requested that his inquiries should be regarded as strictly confidential.

It was after a lapse of five years that Francis received the affectionate welcome that awaited his return to Hexham house. Amidst the joyful confusion of first meeting, Francis perceived nothing in the manner or appearance of Lord Hexham, that denoted any unfavourable change in his spirits; but it could not long escape the young sailor's observation, that such a change had taken place, and that he no longer possessed, as in days of yore, the power to dispel the gloom that affliction had gathered on his uncle's brow. He apprehended no diminution of the parental affection with which Lord Hexham had ever treated him, but he was grieved and disappointed to feel his present unexpected inability to enliven or amuse him. In vain he recounted such anecdotes and adventures, as in absence are often valued, and fondly treasured in the memory chiefly from the hope of imparting pleasure in the home we have left.

Upon one occasion whilst Francis was giving vent to the confident hopefulness of a sanguine disposition, and on another when with pride he recounted to his uncle the eulogium he had accidentally heard pronounced upon his father, he was surprised at the silence preserved by Lord Hexham; nor was his surprise diminished, when, on look-

ing up, he perceived that the eyes of his uncle were riveted upon him with an expression of melancholy earnestness, as though silently contemplating an object of pity. More than once did Lord Hexham appear anxious to communicate something to his young companion, but as often did the communication die on his lips.

At length the time arrived when Francis was again summoned to fulfil the duties of his profession. Lord Hexham appeared much agitated when his nephew informed him how near the hour of separation was at hand; and, for a few minutes afterwards, he remained thoughtful and abstracted—then rising abruptly, as if summoning resolution to perform some act of painful duty, he desired Francis would follow him to his study, where they should not be liable to intrusion.

Francis's heart beat quick with emotion as he obeyed his uncle's command; he experienced that nervous trepidation which even the strongest minds must feel, when finding themselves on the eve of a disclosure so obviously painful. Oh entering, he found Lord Hexham busily employed in selecting some letters from a box. "Francis!" he said, as he looked affectionately towards him; "Francis! my dear boy! the day is fixed for your departure. You entered the profession to which you belong as a child, but you return to it a man; and I cannot run the risk of your learning by accident that which it is my duty to tell you. To me you stand in place of a son; and to my death you look forward with hope, if not with certainty, to the inheritance of all I possess."

"My dear uncle," exclaimed Francis, with warmth, "can you suppose me capable of looking forward to such an event with ——"

"No," interrupted Lord Hexham, "I believe you to be incapable of entertaining any feeling discreditable to yourself or painful to me; but by the law of nature you should be my survivor!" he paused for a moment, and then added in an agitated voice, "Would to heaven I could say that you *must* be my heir!"

To detail the conversation that followed this unexpected declaration would be useless. Francis was fully apprized of those circumstances which had so visibly affected the spirits of his uncle; and having heard with pain and surprise the communication to which he was summoned to

listen, he hastily quitted the apartment, in order to conceal the emotion he could no longer suppress.

We have said before, that Lord Hexham had been anxious that the doubts concerning the period of his brother's marriage should remain unknown to the world at large; but a secret, which is known to many, is seldom inviolably preserved. The real position of Francis Dacre was not unknown to some of Lord Hexham's neighbours; but as none could presume to volunteer an observation on such a subject to Lord Hexham, he believed that it was still unsuspected; and assured his nephew that such was the case.

Francis had hitherto felt indifferent to the prospect of wealth and power held out to him as heir presumptive to Lord Hexham. To have dwelt on the thoughts of deriving any advantage from the death of one so dearly loved would have been revolting to his feelings, and his mind had as yet been principally engrossed by his profession. Perhaps, therefore, the extinction of any hope of hereditary honours, was less likely to be viewed as a disappointment by him, than by one less affectionate in disposition, or more advanced in years. The shock was, nevertheless, severe: bred up in a family who adhered with the strictest tenacity to the honours of ancestry, he had been accustomed from his infancy to hear the stain of illegitimacy regarded as little short of personal disgrace.

But it was not at first that the full extent of its influence upon his feelings was likely to be visible; for, anxious to conceal from his uncle the pain he had so reluctantly inflicted, he struggled with tolerable success during the few remaining days they were to spend together, against the distressing effects of his altered position; but the influence upon his character was not the less sure, for being too slow to be seen by Lord Hexham, too gradual to be perceived by himself. The spirits of youth, and the activity of his profession, preserved him from the gloom which so often succeeds to mortification and disappointment; but they could not preserve him from that sensitiveness which was the precursor of suspicion and irritability, to which he had hitherto been a stranger.

When his uncle assured him that his situation was unknown, he had comforted himself with the reflection that the ignorance of others would long spare him the increased

mortification that must attend its publicity ; but he soon felt convinced, that even for publicity he would willingly exchange the oppressive consciousness of being regarded as other than he knew himself to be. The careless gaiety which till now had characterized his disposition, was constantly checked by circumstances the most trivial. Sometimes he would fancy his secret was known, and then the most casual and unintentional observations were converted by his now morbid imagination into pointed and premeditated allusions to himself. Sometimes he wished for protection from the painful, though accidental allusions, to which this secrecy exposed him in society ; and at other times, reproaching himself with the deceit of maintaining a false character, he was almost tempted to disregard the breach of confidence to his uncle, and to declare at once the secret which rankled in his breast. But he was ever checked by the recollection that such an avowal would not only affect the consideration he might personally enjoy in the world, but must tend still more to debase the estimation in which the memory of his parents was held. "No," thought he, "though I am no longer allowed to regard my mother as blameless, I will be grateful to her as the guardian of my infancy. Should I survive my uncle, the circumstances of my birth must at his death be known to all ; but I will never deserve the reproach of having voluntarily revealed the errors of a parent."

It was not long, however, ere Francis became aware that to one at least of his companions a disclosure on his part was needless. A few months subsequent to his departure from England, Harry Molesworth was appointed to the ship in which Dacre was serving. They had been neighbours in the country—friends at school—and had begun their naval career under the same captain. It was therefore matter of no small satisfaction to each, to find themselves once more embarked as companions in the same voyage.

Upon more than one occasion Francis having remarked that his friend Harry had appeared anxious to turn such conversation as was calculated to wound his feelings, began to suspect that he could not be quite ignorant of his real situation. A discussion one day arising as to the surest road to promotion, Francis was jestingly attacked upon the certainty that the heir of a peer (who voted with go-

vernment) would be found one of those fittest to be promoted upon the earliest opportunity. Francis could ill conceal how little agreeable to him were these allusions to his future prospects; but his young companions, encouraged by the effect they had produced, and unrestrained by the discretion of riper years, persevered in this strain. Francis became irritated beyond endurance; declared he had been insulted, and that the youth whom he regarded as ringleader in the attack should be held seriously responsible for his conduct. Harry Molesworth had joined the circle too late to avert this injudicious outbreak on the part of his friend, but he lost no time in speaking to him alone, to repair the mischief that had occurred.

"Say no more," replied Francis, impatiently. "I have more reason to be vexed than you perhaps imagine: if you knew but half, you would feel with me."

"No," said Harry. "It is because I do feel with you, and for you, that I am so anxious you should press this matter no further. I know to what you allude; I will not deceive you."

Dacre looked at him earnestly for a moment, for he doubted the reality of his knowledge; but the expression of Molesworth's countenance soon undeceived him. Stung by the imaginary disgrace of detection, Dacre then abruptly turned away, saying, bitterly, "I see you know it, but I did not expect to have been taunted by a friend like you."

"Dacre," replied Molesworth, with emotion, "forgive me if I have wounded your feelings in attempting to serve you. Heaven knows, I wished to save you from pain, but I have failed; my bluntness may have offended you, but I am much mistaken in you if you will not at least do justice to my motives."

Such an appeal could not fail to produce the desired effect. Francis held out his hand. The zeal and affection of his friend had overcome in an instant all feelings of anger; and reproaching himself for the harshness and injustice with which he had repelled his kind interference, he now willingly accepted the offer of mediation, which at first he had so unwisely rejected.

The good understanding that had always subsisted between Dacre and Molesworth became necessarily strengthened by the explanation that took place on this occasion. Though greatly inferior to Dacre in natural ability, Harry



Molesworth had the advantage of a judgment unwarped by the wayward fancies of a wounded and susceptible mind. Though devoid of much of that refinement of feeling and taste which commanded for Dacre the affection and respect of all who knew him, he was greatly his superior in evenness of temper and of spirits, differences which tended greatly to rivet their mutual regard. Moreover, knowing as he did the secret cause, he could sympathize with those feelings in Dacre, that were regarded by others as the fruits of a haughty and capricious disposition; and though often deprecating the effects which sprung from that cause, he felt only regret when others felt resentment. In the society of Harry Molesworth, Dacre also felt a pleasure unknown to him in that of any other person; for in his company he was free from the self-reproach which he had attached to the concealment of his situation. To these combined circumstances, rather than to any particular resemblance in character, must be attributed a constancy of friendship, unclouded by those interruptions which, too often on the part of Dacre, disturbed the goodwill of others towards him, and procured for him the injurious reputation of caprice.

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## CHAPTER V.

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,  
 Whatever stirs this mortal frame;  
 All are but ministers of Love,  
 And feed his sacred flame.

COLERIDGE.

AT the age of four-and-twenty Dacre quitted the navy. His youthful enthusiasm for the service had somewhat subsided: it had already afforded him the means of seeing much of the world, and the hope of continued peace deprived him of the prospect of any glorious distinction in

such a career. These circumstances alone would probably not have been sufficient to induce such a change ; but with increasing years and with declining health, Lord Hexham became daily more conscious of the cheerlessness of a solitary home. This fact he no longer concealed from his nephew ; and Francis, who owed to his uncle almost more than filial duty and affection, consented, without hesitation, to forestal the half expressed wish that he should quit a profession which necessitated such long separations.

It was about a year previous to this important step that Dacre formed an acquaintance in Italy, which materially influenced his feelings, and promised to have no slight effect upon the happiness of his after life. At that period he first became acquainted with Lord and Lady Kendal ; and it was not long before he felt himself powerfully attracted by their daughter, Lady Emily Somers. The arrival of Lord Kendal and his family at Naples by land, had preceded by a very short time that of Dacre by sea. An introduction was soon effected, and as Lord Kendal was rich and hospitable, and showed no lack of that sociable desire to cultivate the acquaintance of his countrymen, which the English so invariably display as soon as they have quitted England, no opportunity was wanting for ripening acquaintance into friendship, or friendship into love. Invitations were given and accepted ; the hand of Lady Emily was sought, and received for the dance ; parties of pleasure were formed, and scenes equally new and enchanting to both were viewed for the first time together.

A thousand opportunities for falling in love are afforded to young people in a continental tour, which are denied them in England. The mountain path cannot be ascended alone, but imperatively requires the supporting arm of the companion : without his careful assistance the mule would not thread its dangerous way, and her safety requires his attendance at her side. The distant expedition brings a moonlight return. They listen to the murmuring ripple of the wave as it gently reaches the shore, and the joyous sound of voices softened by the distance breaks upon the ear. They gaze on the tremulous stream of silver light which dances on the scarcely ruffled waters, and watch with wonder and delight the red bickering flame that ever and anon shoots upwards from the summit of Vesuvius. Their feelings are brought into unison by sympathy in the

contemplative pleasures which such scenes must produce ; and the gay frivolity of the ball-room is exchanged for the silent enthusiasm which nature awakes.

It is at moments like these, when the petty anxieties of life are absorbed in the sublimity of the scene—when the thoughts are not selfishly engaged in a search for admiration—when the heart is not hardened by the vain ambition of conquest—that we are most accessible to tenderness and attachment. It is at moments like these that—when silence is at length broken—the warm in heart and the pure in mind dare to pour forth those sentiments which are least suited to the gaiety of society, and least understood by the cold and reckless.

It was under circumstances thus favourable to the growth of his passion, that Dacre became warmly attached to Lady Emily Somers. He loved with all the freshness and ardour of a first attachment ; and the kind welcome with which he was ever received by Lord and Lady Kendal would have flattered him with the belief that his attentions to their daughter were not displeasing to them, had not the suspicion that he was indebted for this encouragement to their ignorance of his real position and prospects, proved a constant check to his hopes. The child who believes itself concealed when it closes its eyes, does not practise a greater self-delusion, than the man who believes that the motives and feelings by which he is actuated, and which are ever most present to his own mind, must be equally apparent to the minds of others. How often does this delusion give a meaning where nothing was meant. What a superstructure of perverted facts is raised upon this groundwork of imagination, and how great, how humiliating the astonishment, when the disappearance of the baseless fabric reveals the naked truth !

In the facilities so frequently afforded to Dacre, Lord Kendal had no matrimonial views for his daughter. The attractions of Lady Emily had accustomed him to see her always attended and courted, and he was totally unconscious of there existing in Dacre any particular preference towards her. Lord Kendal had deservedly the reputation of being a clever man ; but he was not an observant one. He was well-informed, but was more proud of being conversant with the fine arts than, as was thought by some, his knowledge warranted. In Dacre he ever found an obliging and

an intelligent listener. He knew that Dacre had much taste and information upon these subjects; and if Lord Kendal had the ill luck to misname a picture, miscall a statue, or misdate a building, the admirer of his daughter had too much tact to betray the error. Dacre was therefore found an agreeable addition to every party; and thus, whilst seeking a pleasant companion for himself, Lord Kendal was innocently providing a lover for his daughter.

With Lady Kendal the case was different. She had no doubt of the real cause of Dacre's willingness to seek, and to be sought by them. She liked to see her daughter admired, and felt a preference for those who admired her. She approved of all that she had observed or heard of Dacre; and though in no hurry to part with Emily, yet, as her maternal vanity was flattered by his devotion, she opposed no obstacles to the opportunities of being with her, which Lord Kendal so frequently afforded him. Lady Kendal carefully abstained from all mention of her opinions on this subject to her husband—Lord Kendal was not to be trusted in such matters. He had never lived much with young people. Early in life he had married the only person upon whom he had ever bestowed his affections, and he looked upon every flirtation that did not terminate in matrimony, as an idle and reprehensible expenditure of time and sentiment. He forgot that time was often necessary to create a reciprocity of feeling; and in more than one instance he had most unceremoniously dropped all intercourse with those whom report had in any degree connected with the name of his daughter. His modes of discouraging were pointed and decisive; but were certainly not considerate or mild. Lady Kendal was aware that not even the charms of Lady Emily, could overcome the effects that frequent repetitions of such treatment must produce. When, therefore, Lord Kendal possessed the same means as herself of judging upon such matters, Lady Kendal did not think it necessary to sound the alarm, by imparting to him the results of her own observations. She had been so accustomed to see her daughter pass unharmed through the fiery ordeal of flirtation, that the danger of risking her happiness by tacitly permitting her admirers to win her affections, if they could, did not occur to her mind.

Though Dacre was not mistaken in supposing that Lady

Kendal perceived his attentions to Lady Emily, it may easily be imagined that he deceived himself as often in the degree of meaning which he attached to her conduct towards him, as in believing that Lord Kendal had either desired or accepted him as a son-in-law. The more he felt secure of the approbation of Lord and Lady Kendal, the more sensitively alive did he become to the fear lest he might be indebted for much of their good-will to their erroneous impression concerning his future position in the world. These fears were exchanged, in time, for the painful certainty that Lord Kendal did regard him as the heir to Lord Hexham.

The day preceding that which was appointed for the departure of Lord Kendal and his family from Naples, a conversation took place at his house upon the new members who were likely to be elected for the ensuing Parliament. Dacre was strongly advised, by some of the party who were present, to take the opportunity of his approaching return to England to come forward in political life. In the course of the evening he had the mortification of accidentally overhearing Lord Kendal explain to the gentleman who was most pressing in his advice upon the subject, the inexpediency of Dacre making any effort to become a member of the House of Commons, when in all probability he would be called before the next dissolution to take the place he must inherit in the House of Lords.

Dacre saw that the conversation did not stop here; but he heard no more. He had been an unwilling though an interested listener to a remark that was obviously not intended for his ear, and he felt bound in honour instantly to remove out of the reach of any further observations on himself. He stole one glance at Lord Kendal, and fancied that he read in his countenance a look of surprise at the answer he received from the gentleman with whom he was conversing. The idea that, at that moment Lord Kendal might possibly be, for the first time, learning the error he had committed in regarding him as heir to Lord Hexham, instantly rushed upon his mind. He felt humiliated and oppressed by the thought; and though a few short hours must now bring that separation between himself and Lady Emily, to which he had hitherto looked forward with so much dread, he was the first of the party who arose to depart.

A last meeting of those who during many previous months have lived in frequent habits of friendly communion is always sad,—sad to the heart, even when it wears a fictitious garb of forced gaiety; but most sad, when, as in the present instance, it is a last meeting in a foreign land. It is not only that when abroad the ties of country bind us more closely to each other, and seems as it were like ties of kindred; but there is the superadded consciousness that, too probably, we may never meet again under circumstances that will cause those ties to be of equal value. In our own land we often witness the dispersion of a society of intimate friends. We fly from the town to the country—from the country to the town—but our parting is not embittered by a thought that we shall never participate in such scenes again; or that if we meet, it will be with that change of feeling which altered positions and associations, and a diminished dependence on each other for friendly offices or social pleasure, have a natural tendency to produce.

Upon these occasions there is a melancholy sense of everything being done for the last time, which even the spirits of the gayest can scarcely resist. As the evening wears away, the easy flow of conversation is arrested by this depressing thought; the force of argument seems paralyzed; the brilliant sally and the quick repartee die unuttered on the lips; the laugh is seldom raised; the voice of merriment is hushed; and silence at length gives warning that the moment of separation is at hand. All feel that a term of pleasure is concluded; and each is unwilling to proclaim its end, and bid good-by.

There were many of those friends assembled at Lord Kendal's for the purpose of taking leave, who lingered late that evening; there were others who rose early the next morning to bid adieu once more; but Dacre did neither: he could think only of the change that might have been effected toward him in the feelings of the parents (perhaps even in those of their daughter herself) by the possible disclosures of the preceding evening, and he thought even absence was preferable to the chance of being exposed to the chilling blight of an altered manner.

Lord Kendal returned to England; and many months had not elapsed before Dacre, soon after his own arrival in London, found himself warmly greeted by the family on

whom his happiness now so much depended. Their meeting was accidental. In Lady Emily he flattered himself he saw just such embarrassment as he could have wished; and by Lord and Lady Kendal he was kindly reproached for not apprizing them of his return. The charm of this unexpected kindness was however soon broken. He could not feel certain that Lord Kendal had been undeceived respecting him; and he determined one morning, when alone with Lady Kendal, to ascertain whether he might consider the ready welcome that always awaited him at their house, as proceeding only from personal regard to himself, or as possibly directed towards the heir of Lord Hexham. He succeeded in his object; but discovered, to his mortification, that they were no better informed as to his prospects than at the time when he overheard that, which he knew to be false, so innocently stated as a matter of fact by Lord Kendal.

Till now his conscience had been free from giving any sanction to the error. So long as he felt doubtful upon the subject, he could not reproach himself with knowingly encouraging the deception; but the case was now altered. He had so led the conversation with Lady Kendal as to elicit all he sought to know, without committing himself to any assertion or contradiction on the subject; but he could not any longer plead doubt to himself as an excuse for a want of openness, which might be regarded by them as dishonourable. His position became extremely embarrassing; he could not feel at ease; and this constraint diminished even the pleasure which he had hitherto derived from the society of Lady Emily. If they met at a ball, he abstained from offering himself as her partner: others were allowed to hand her to her carriage. He no longer maintained his position in the opera-box: his visits became less frequent, his attentions less marked; and, though his feelings were unaltered, it seemed to be as often his wish to avoid as to seek the object of his affections.

This state of affairs was too painful to admit of any pleasure, and he therefore resolved to join his uncle in the country, in order that he might either obtain his consent to an open declaration being made to Lady Emily and her parents, of his prospects and his wishes, or else to withdraw at once from the society of her whose attractions became daily more destructive to his peace.

Lord Hexham was one with whom all were obliged to consider well the time, and watch for the most fitting opportunity to mention any subject which demanded his attention, or to which it might not be agreeable to him to listen. He was of a nervous and irritable disposition, and it was very unfortunate for Dacre, that on his arrival at Hexham House, he found his uncle more than usually unwell. Dacre was aware how important it was to his health that he should not be agitated, and for above a fortnight he delayed, in the daily hope of seeing such amendment as would enable him, without risk, to lay open his heart to his uncle. He waited in vain : at the end of that time, Lord Hexham had a seizure from which he never recovered, though his existence was prolonged for some months : but his faculties had been impaired by the shock ; his powers of reasoning and comprehension were extinguished, and he expired in the arms of his nephew, wholly uninformed of all that Dacre had wished to impart.

The circumstances which Dacre had so unwillingly kept secret were now known to all. Lord Hexham was dead, and the supposed heir presumptive did not assume the title. He was, therefore, no longer fettered by scruples from declaring his affection for Lady Emily ; and his uncle having, greatly to his surprise, bequeathed him a considerable fortune, he hoped, that should he succeed in procuring her consent to his wishes, he should meet with no opposition from her parents. There had been no communication between them and himself since he had left London, the preceding summer. During the lingering illness of his uncle, he had never quitted him for a single day : he had heard nothing from them ; and, situated as he was, he had been restrained by delicacy from writing unasked.



## CHAPTER VI.

Oh! impotent estate of human life!  
 Where hope and fear maintain eternal strife;  
 Where fleeting joy does lasting doubt inspire,  
 And most we question what we most admire.  
 Among thy various gifts, great Heaven, bestow  
 Our cup of love unmixed! PRIOR.

It was late in the spring, when Dacre returned to London, in a mood of mingled excitement and depression. His heart glowed with the ardent hope of successful love, but his spirits were still depressed by the loss of his earliest friend and protector. The cheering expectations, excited by the recollection of past kindnesses, were sometimes involuntarily checked by the fear lest worldly ambition should impede their fulfilment. He was determined to lose no time in explaining his feelings, and he looked forward with feverish impatience to the moment that must release him from the suspense in which he had so long remained. His first act after arriving in town was to call at Lady Kendal's; but he called in vain. It was a Wednesday morning, and it occurred to him that Almack's might possibly afford him that evening the wished-for meeting, and thither he determined to go.

There are many to whom the name of a ball conveys no other idea than the meeting of various persons, to indulge in the unmeaning practice of dancing: there are others who look upon a ball as the means of conquest and display. By some it is regarded as the business of life; by others as the frivolous recreation of unthinking people. By the wily matron it is viewed as a market; by the presumptuous heir apparent as the bazaar from which he may select his mate at pleasure; and there are those among the elders, who, regarding it as the innocent outbreak of joy and mirth in the young, benignantly approve of such

safety-valve to the exuberance of youthful spirits. But with far other feelings is such a scene viewed by the lover, for to him only it becomes the theatre of romance, and the dwelling-place of passion.

There have been some who think that love is a native of the rocks; but its birth-place matters little, when once it is called into being, for it can thrive alike wherever it is transplanted. It shrouds itself in an atmosphere of its own creation, and sees the surrounding objects through the medium of its own fanciful halo. The existence of colour depends not more on the rays of the sun, than depends the hue which is lent to all that is external, upon the internal feelings of the mind. The bustling scenes of gaiety may appear ill-suited to the indulgence of deep feeling; yet the mind which is pre-occupied by one absorbing thought, has not only an inward attraction that bids defiance to the intrusions of others, but has even the power of converting into aliment all that should tend to destroy its force. The crowds that pass before the eyes of a lover, seem but as a procession of which his mistress is the queen. If he talks to another, it is to listen to the welcome theme of her praise from the voice of partial friendship; and if the actions of others ever attract his attention, it is to observe, with the jealous watchfulness of a lover, the manner and reception of those whom he regards as rivals.

It was in a frame of mind very accessible to such feelings that Dacre entered the room. His nervous impatience had induced him to repair there early; and he found himself among the little knot of company who prowled about the room waiting for the expected crowd, half angry at the tardiness of others, and half ashamed of their own punctuality. His eyes were intent upon the door, and he anxiously watched that slow distinct arrival of group after group which marks the languid beginning of a ball. But now the plot thickens—the group have mingled, and there are bowings of heads, and greetings of tongues, and shaking of hands; the tide presses forward; the music tempts not in vain; partners are chosen; chaperons scramble for benches; the crowd becomes dense, and the ball is alive.

Dacre waited in painful suspense till within a few minutes of the hour of hopeless exclusion, and had almost resigned his hopes, when he saw, with nervous delight, the long delayed entry of Lady Kendal and her daughter.

He approached, but with an alacrity which was checked more and more, every instant, by the misgiving which their manner inspired. He saw at the first glance that they had perceived his presence from afar ; but where was that look of pleasure which ought to have accompanied the recognition ? He missed it ; but no matter : " Women," said he to himself, " are not demonstrative. I dare say they will be glad to see me ;" and to this humble point of unromantic expectation had his high hopes been cooled down in the course of the very few seconds which elapsed before he was near enough to shake them by the hand.

Alas ! proximity brought no improvement. He struggled for an instant against admitting to himself that there was positive alteration in their manner ; but the fact was undeniable : Lady Emily received him with cold embarrassment ; Lady Kendal with the indifference of mere civility. Lady Emily, when he drew near, was talking gaily to Sir Edward Bradford. His approach visibly checked her liveliness ; and it seemed a welcome relief, when, an instant afterwards, Sir Edward offered her his arm to lead her away to another part of the room.

Dacre watched her with bitter intentness—saw the cloud of gravity which his presence had cast, continue for a few moments—and then smiles returned—and she even began to laugh gaily with her companion ; and then Dacre looked at her no longer. He turned away, and it was with a pain and desolation of heart that he had never known before ; for at that moment he felt the first access of a passion to which he had hitherto been a stranger,—jealousy. To be subjected to change—to coldness—was cruel ; but to see another preferred, and to feel that another now occupied the place he would have filled—and to see that Emily could smile at the pain she inflicted,—all this was a severe aggravation.

With a heart swelling at the thought, he resolved to obtain that evening some explanation of this unexpected change of manner. He sought an opportunity of again approaching Lady Kendal, and addressed her with some trifling observation, in the vain hope of engaging her in conversation. She answered him with the same cool civility with which she had greeted him on her entrance ; but she originated nothing in return. Dacre would gladly

have exchanged the most pointed rudeness for such chilling politeness ; for the one might have seemed a justification for his asking the explanation he sought ; whilst the other blasted his hopes without the power of redress, or even of complaint. Just as he was about to retire under the galling consciousness that his presence was unwelcome, Lady Emily returned from the dance to take her station by her mother's side. To quit the spot as she drew nigh was repugnant to his feelings ; and he still lingered, in hopes of once more awakening in her the tone of friendly intimacy that her mother had abandoned. But again he was disappointed ; she carefully avoided meeting his eye, and it was not till Lady Kendal had gently touched her arm that she appeared to heed him. Her reply was short and repulsive ; and immediately taking advantage of the vicinity of a female friend, she engaged herself in conversation, so as to preclude the possibility of being again addressed by him.

Dacre retired to his lonely home, disappointed and wounded by the events of the evening. During the whole of that day, the expected meeting with Lady Emily had been the one prevailing subject of his thoughts. His imagination had been busily employed in picturing to himself the time and the manner of that meeting ; his fears had faded, as the coming pleasure of again beholding her had, with its approach, gained force ; and he had entered the ball-room full of anxious, yet hopeful, anticipations. Those past occasions rose to his mind, on which he had felt that, had he been differently situated, he might have dared to declare his sentiments. He imagined their recurrence, and, in fancy, rehearsed the scene that now, under altered circumstances, might soon ensue—perhaps that very evening. But the evening was past—the meeting was over—and all his bright visions had faded before the cold reality of unrequited affection. His imagination had exalted him to the station of an accepted lover ; and he had sunk in a few short minutes to the chilling level of a mere acquaintance. Yet what right had he to complain ? Had their conduct been such as to justify his asking—“ What is my offence ? ” He might have then looked forward to the enjoyment of that exciting happiness which attends a reconciliation with those we love. But he felt that their conduct did not warrant any such question, and that he could not presume to reproach them with having merely disappointed his expect-

tations of the pleasure they would testify at meeting him, or in the degree of regard they entertained for him. He saw his prospects were clouded, and that his hopes of happiness were delayed, if not extinguished.

Dacre soon found that it was not only from Lady Kendal and from Lady Emily Somers that he was destined to endure a change of manner. He was no longer Lord Kendal's chosen referee upon a meditated purchase of a statue or a picture—on the bet he might venture to make at his club, or the vote he ought to give in parliament—no longer the welcome third to enliven his *tete-à-tete* ride with his daughter—no longer the guest whom they almost scolded if he did not frequently avail himself of a general invitation to their table. The idea that he was despised by the parents on account of his birth, and possibly superseded in the affection of their child, soon took possession of his mind. He felt at once offended and humiliated; and gladly would he have rooted from his heart an attachment which was secure only of opposition, and which he now saw so much reason to believe was not reciprocal. But this was impossible; and the tenacity with which this feeling still clung, and the vigour with which it resisted every effort to uproot it, served only, by convincing him of its strength, greatly to increase the depression of spirit, and morbid sensibility, which rendered valueless in his eyes every advantage he possessed, and to deprive him, by degrees, of all power of enjoyment.

Still were there many by whom Francis Dacre was envied. It was not known to the world that his affections were preoccupied; but it was well known to all that he bore a high reputation for talent and acquirement—and that he was young, good-looking, and rich. His manner was natural, his countenance expressive; and his story had excited interest. He was still sufficiently new in the London world to be an object of curiosity; and the diversity of opinion respecting the merits and failings of his character, made him a theme of more frequent discussion, and of far greater interest, than if all had been agreed upon the qualities that entitled him to praise or to censure. By some he was lauded with enthusiasm, and by others regarded as disappointing and cold; by one party he was accused of melancholy—by another, of caprice. At one time, the un-  
 ainted freshness of his mind was extolled—at another, he

was reproached for his untimely indifference to the pleasures of life ; and those whose imagination supplied them with no better comment to offer, were contented to say he was unlike other people. From one danger he always safely escaped—that of being overlooked, even in the crowded society in which he lived—for, without effort, he became “the fashion.”

With such recommendations, it was not surprising that Dacre should find himself an object of interest to match-making mothers, flirtations daughters, and coquettish wives. In the vain hope of supplanting the image of her who alone occupied his mind, he sometimes endeavoured to appreciate the charms and admire the beauties, of others ; he tried to be, or to seem, amused and interested ; but to no purpose. There were two objects which often passed before his eyes, and rendered futile his strongest resolution. The sight of Lady Emily Somers made ineffectual his assumption of indifference ; and he never met Sir Edward Bradford, but the spirit of jealousy, which he flattered himself was dormant, would boil anew as fiercely as before. No wonder, then, that the jury of fair ladies who kindly sat in judgment upon his disposition, should have returned against Dacre the terrible verdict of “wilful caprice, and cold indifference,”—no wonder that all who convicted him of such offences, should earnestly desire his punishment : for man’s heart is the natural prey and property of woman ; and he who refuses to surrender it to any one of the many who may be willing to accept it, is apt to be treated as a common enemy, that has resisted a just authority. To subdue him, is ever accounted a service to the common cause ; and success is hailed with applause, though it may not outweigh the envy which it excites.

“So Lady Anne has fixed upon Mr. Dacre for her next conquest,” said the Dowager Lady A——, who always touched, without preface or scruple, upon any bit of gossip it had been her good fortune to learn.\*

“She will do less harm than usual,” replied the sarcastic Mrs. B——. “There will be no love lost between those two, for both are equally void of feeling.”

Lady C—— cast a significant look towards her daughter, as she whispered to a few confidential friends, that Lady Anne had succeeded, as usual, in spoiling a match ;

but whether the daughter of Lady C—— could, with truth, claim the proud distinction of having been neglected by Mr. Dacre, or whether both he and Lady Anne were in reality so totally void of susceptibility, it is at present unnecessary to disclose; but certain it is, that when the eye of gossip saw the bright countenance of Lady Anne Preston beaming with pleasure at the approach of Mr. Dacre—watched him evening after evening listen with unusual attention to her flow of conversation—the tocsin was sounded, a flirtation proclaimed, and a theme for curiosity and a subject for inquisitive speculation was founded.

It so happened that both the Kendals and Lady Anne Preston lingered late in London—Dacre did the same—and whilst he could not disguise from himself that the breach had unequivocally widened between himself and the former, he became daily more conscious of the power possessed by the latter to occupy his attention and promote his amusement. But all things must have an end; and by the time the last wagons bore their cumbrous weight from the doors of those who tarried longest—and when assizes and races, bow meetings and regattas, had robbed London of its last idlers—they also had all departed in the different directions to which duty or pleasure had summoned them.

It is well that, once a year, the tide of folly and malice is checked in its course by the timely interference of change of company and place. Many an error is repented, and many a slander is forgotten, in this fortunate cessation of opportunities to feed and promulgate the gossip of society. It may be sad to take leave of the scenes of pleasure; but to how many does the absence of temptation prove the best safeguard for their conduct! Let it, therefore, be some consolation to the benevolent lingerer in town, who is daily obliged to witness the dreary Westend scene, to remember that, by this cheerless privation of bustle and amusement, some may be spared that worse desolation of heart—the loss of an approving conscience.

## CHAPTER VII.

Vain pleasures of luxurious life,  
 For ever with yourselves at strife ;  
 \* \* \*

When will your hapless patrons learn  
 To watch and ponder—to discern  
 The freshness, the eternal youth,  
 Of admiration sprung from truth,  
 From beauty infinitely growing  
 Upon a mind with love o'erflowing ;  
 To sound the depths of every art,  
 That seeks its wisdom through the heart.

WORDSWORTH.

THE scene changes to Hatton, the country residence of Lord and Lady Whitby, where Dacre was an expected guest. In Lord and Lady Whitby there was a fortunate similarity of disposition. They lived in a state of self-gratulation on the superiority of their wealth and possessions over those of their more humble neighbours. Endowed with large fortune, and small understanding, they cultivated their failings and miscalled them virtues ; and if, Pharisee like, they felt grateful for being not as others are, they certainly thought it matter of still greater gratitude to all around, that such a statesman—such a Lord-lieutenant—such a landlord—and such a Lady Bountiful, should have blessed the neighbourhood with their presence.

“ Well, Mrs. Jackson ! I really must leave it to you : I had no idea so many people would have accepted,” said Lady Whitby, in a tone of despair to her housekeeper, after trying in vain to arrange with her that most perplexing matter—the *location* of more guests than the house could conveniently hold.

“ It is very unfortunate indeed, my Lady,” replied the disconsolate Mrs. Jackson. “ Isn’t there no chance of some of your Ladyship’s friends being unable to come ? ”



"None, I am afraid. Remember we have settled that the Duke and Duchess of Bolton are to have the red damask room; and then there is the yellow satin, and the blue silk, and the green room, and the Eastern apartment; and then there is the governess's room. Tell Miss Pearson she can sleep in the nursery; and some of the young ladies who are coming can be put into the attics; as for the single gentlemen, they can go into the servants' room; you know single gentlemen can always be put anywhere; in short, you must manage it some how."

Poor Mrs. Jackson wondered how she should ever succeed in making fifteen rooms afford a room apiece to twenty people; but seeing all further assistance from her Ladyship was hopeless, she quitted the apartment, leaving Lady Whitby to the uninterrupted perusal of an answer to one of the recently issued invitations to Hatton. The letter was from Mrs. Ashby, as follows:—

"MY DEAR LADY WHITBY,

"I need hardly assure you with how much pleasure both my daughters and myself have received your kind summons to Hatton. It is so good of you to have thought of us; but pray never think of mentioning our rooms; you know of old that we like to be treated *sans façon*, and that you can put us into any corner. We are so delighted at having the opportunity of seeing dear Lady Maria's *début*, though the idea of *your* having a daughter old enough to *come out* is really incredible. It seems but yesterday since *four* marriage; and as my impertinent children always accuse me of being a little too honest, you must know it is no flattery when *I* say, that *seeing* you does not help to undeceive me.

"Nobody thinks or talks of anything but the birthday ball at Hatton. It always is *the* topic throughout the county, and now excites even double its usual commotion from the curiosity and interest felt in the appearance of Lady Maria. What a pity it is, my dear Lady Whitby, that every mother who wishes well to her daughters, does not adopt your excellent plan, of keeping them strictly confined to the school-room till they take leave of it forever. It not only keeps their minds fresh, but gives so much *éclat* to their first appearance.

"You ask me how Mr. Dacre was liked at Thornberry.

Poor, dear, good Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth, who know nothing of the world, and see very little difference between one person and another, found no fault in him. Young Saville called him a *gêne*; and my naughty girls, who will always say what they think, declared they found him such a very incomprehensible, unsatisfactory person, that he was no acquisition. I will not deny that I was a little disappointed in him myself; it is so very difficult to become acquainted, that I really think I knew him better the first evening, than I did the last; but I am grown old enough to make allowances, and the fact is, we were such a humdrum party there, that, except ourselves and George Saville, there was nobody *dans son genre*. I am quite glad to think we shall meet him at Hatton, where he *must* shine if he can. You know every one envies your talent of drawing people out; so you must not be surprised at my giving no opinion till I have seen him *chez vous*.

"The girls wish to know whether the starving Irish are to have a fancy ball, or a bazaar next spring. We hear the patriots are to have whichever the Irish don't want. We, of course, mean only to go to the one you patronise; and they would send directly for the materials for Poonah painting, if you were likely to want things for a stall.

"I suppose you have heard that Lord Winthrop is ruined, and his creditors will only allow him 5000*l.* a year, *pour tout potage*. Lady Winthrop is very much to be pitied. Poor soul! her famous diamond necklace and tiara are to be sold with the other things.

"Lord John Fareham's marriage with Miss Cobb is on again. Cobb *père* has behaved shamefully, and has placed every farthing of her fortune out of Lord John's power. (One should really suppose he didn't know why he marries her!) The marriage was off for a few days, and dear Lord John, who wrote to Mr. Saville, said in his *naïf* way, that nothing short of the ill-bred knocking of his distracting creditors should have made him sell himself to such a Jew!

"Georgiana Gordon's marriage is declared. The young people are all happiness; but Mr. Tracy can boast of little more than good abilities and good character; and as neither love, learning, or virtue will do to live upon, I do think it is very wrong in her parents to give their consent. She really is a pretty girl, and was so much admired, that I cannot understand their allowing her to throw herself away.

"Now, then, my dear Lady Whitby, having written, as you desired, all the news I had heard, I will conclude by repeating the expression of the pleasure with which we look forward to the day appointed for our visit to Hatton; and begging you will accept for yourself, and give to dear Lady Maria, my daughters' kindest remembrances, believe me, my dear Lady Whitby, yours very sincerely,

"LYDIA ASHBY."

As most people like to be thought what they wish to be, to hear the echo of their own opinion upon such a subject is always agreeable. Lady Whitby felt this, and had the wisdom always to take some one under her special protection, who, like Mrs. Ashby, was "a little too honest;" no wonder, therefore, that she should mentally exclaim, as she finished the letter, "how remarkably well Mrs. Ashby writes!"

The time that had elapsed between the discussion of these arrangements which had so much embarrassed the anxious Mrs. Jackson, and the arrival of the company in question, brought nothing worth recording. Dacre was but slightly acquainted with Lord and Lady Whitby; but as Lord Whitby had always a professed regard for his uncle, Lord Hexham, and Lady Whitby knew he was the fashion, they had both agreed on the propriety of his being invited to Hatton. When, however, Dacre approached the vast front of this large Palladian house, and began to consider on how little he knew of its owners, and to speculate on the number of guests it might contain, and to think of the lottery of country-house pleasures, he almost doubted his own wisdom in having accepted the invitation.

There are, perhaps, few people to whom the feeling of shyness is unknown. Neither sex nor age are always proof against its visitations; and there is no time when its presence is more sensibly felt than on first arriving at the large country house of a slight acquaintance. Circumstances had rendered Dacre peculiarly sensitive; and in spite of having lived much in society, he was easily accessible to the influence of this feeling. The well-bred groom of the chambers having politely presumed he would like to be shown to his room immediately on his arrival, he was spared the shower of questions respecting the state of the

roads, and the road he came, and the hour he set off, and the comparison of clocks, with which a new-comer is always assailed: but on whom he was to depend for a week's amusement he was still ignorant.

The dinner hour came, and Dacre was greeted on the stairs by the well-known voice of Lady Anne Preston. It was a welcome sound, and the pleasure of the meeting was heightened by its unexpectedness. Lady Anne had not only the power of generally making others bestow their admiration on her, but had also the more endearing quality of putting them on good terms with themselves; and Dacre entered the drawing-room far better satisfied than when he had quitted his own room, with the prospects of his visit.

The company assembled at Hatton consisted of the Duke and Duchess of Bolton, Mr. and Lady Anne Preston, Lord Clermont, Lord and Lady Henry Mansel, Mr. Maitland, Mr. Rowley, a melancholy-looking chaplain, and a smiling young tutor. Among the first of those by whom Dacre was accosted on his entrance, was the Duke of Bolton. They had met occasionally in London; and the little they had seen of each other had produced a mutual inclination for further acquaintance.

The Duke was some years senior to Dacre, undistinguished in appearance, but of an intelligent and agreeable countenance; sensible in conversation, and sometimes humorous, though never brilliant. He was eminently right-minded—a man whom the ultras of party faction, whether Tory or Radical, dreaded and disliked; the former fearing his liberality—the latter disappointed in the hope of his support. He was calculated to satisfy neither of these classes, for he was not a selfish monopolist, and would sacrifice nothing for mob popularity. A naturally good understanding had been well stored with information, and habits of occupation had been carefully cultivated. He had read and observed much—much, not in one sphere alone, but in the various aspects of many-coloured life; and, to use a phrase hackneyed but expressive, he had learned “to march with the age.” In the social exercise of those advantages to which he was born, he showed good taste, sense, and feeling. Hospitable without ostentation, he encouraged by his wealth without humiliating by his patronage; and free from the pride of birth and station, he

remembered only his own situation as a means to procure him the society of those whose superior talents and acquirements he respected.

It is the fate of distinction to be most often misjudged, because obscurity is not judged at all—and under this disadvantage the Duchess of Bolton too frequently laboured. Before her marriage she was considered a quiet, well-mannered girl; and had she been the wife of an obscure individual, she would have passed for a dull, unobtrusive woman; but as the Duchess of Bolton, she was accused of *hauteur*. The accusation was undeserved; but as she was very shy, rather short-sighted, and a little indolent, her manner did, in truth, sometimes justify the impression. Dacre was amongst those who held this unfavourable opinion of her disposition; and when he found himself accidentally placed by her side at dinner, he felt even more than ordinary pleasure at finding on the other Lady Anne Preston—for Lady Anne never failed to be agreeable.

Vanity was with her the one great moving principle of thought and action. She sought admiration from all, and obtained it from many; for she possessed in a remarkable degree that quick discrimination of character, which taught her to select with judgment the weakness she assailed. Coquetry became to her an art, and, like the skilful chess-player, she laid her plan upon a sagacious application of rules founded on experience. But though the charm of conquest was great, the pain of defeat was greater; and her life was one of triumph without happiness, and mortification without humility.

Mr. Preston was a good-looking young man, about twenty-seven years of age, of serious pursuits, and a frivolous mind. Not fond of study, and very fond of display, he affected deep researches, and acquired shallow knowledge. An early propensity for collecting shells, and stuffing birds, had been construed into a love of science; and a memory for technicalities, into the fruits of labour. The decorations of his library confirmed him a scholar, whilst the imagination of an upholsterer, and the judgment of a jeweller, gave pretensions to taste. Thus disguising the soul of a dandy in the garb of a pedant he deceived himself, if not others, into the belief that his objects were elevated, and his abilities universal.

Lord Clermont had just attained his majority. During

a long minority, his guardians had laboured hard to increase his store, but not his wisdom ; and at the age of twenty-one, he found himself in the dangerous possession of a full purse and an empty head.

Lord Henry Mansel was a good-humoured, pennyless, handsome, younger brother, who had been fortunate enough recently to obtain the hand and affections of an heiress. Lady Henry was lively and pretty ; and they were both devoted to amusement and to each other, and both equally ignorant of the value of money. Their marriage produced neither increase of luxury on his part, nor diminution of expenditure on hers, for he had always had everything he desired without paying, and she could always pay for everything she desired. Lady Henry would have viewed retrenchment in him as a reflection on her generosity, and Lord Henry would have been horrified at the sacrifice of any self-denial in her ; so, whilst every one was speculating on how long a limited income would supply unlimited demands, they rejoiced in the present, and feared nothing for the future.

Mr. Maitland was a constant dweller in other men's houses. He was one of those gentlemen of little means and great wants, who barter criticism for luxury, and whose sickly fastidiousness and avowed discontent diminished the obligation, without impairing the economy, of gratifying his tastes at other people's expense. Shrewd in worldly knowledge, he had the advantage of understanding society better than society understood him ; and, therefore, though he valued himself highly, he was taken at his own valuation. His self-indulgence was called exquisite refinement ; his love of detraction, keen observation ; his insatiable curiosity, the interest of friendship ; his love of interference, a desire to be useful ; and his treacherous gossip, amusing conversation.

Mr. Rowley was a dull man of deep reading, and profound ignorance. He pored over musty folios for half a century, without understanding their contents ; and once wrote an article in the "Gentleman's Magazine" upon the illegible inscription of a newly discovered tombstone. But the tomb was supposed to contain the mouldering remains of an undistinguished ancestor of Lord Whitby ; and Mr. Rowley became a frequent guest at Hatton. He was raised to the dignity of an antiquarian, and rescued from the igno-

minious obscurity of a tiresome country neighbour, to become the obsequious hanger-on of a great house. Lord Whitby was fond of patronage ; and as Mr. Rowley was willing to be patronised, Lord Whitby had the advantage of encouraging merit, without risking his dignity.

Such was the company ; and their commentaries and opinions upon such topics as a dinner table produces, were just what might be expected from their respective dispositions. The Duke of Bolton playfully endeavoured to correct some of Lady Whitby's erroneous statements of electioneering stories ; but that was quite hopeless ; for she never understood a joke, and liked her own version best. Lord Whitby praised everything at his table ; owned he piqued himself on the Hatton venison, and could venture to recommend some wine, because he had imported it. Mr. Preston, who made a point of talking to every body on their own subject, utterly confused Mr. Rowley by asking his opinion respecting some fossil bones, of which he had never heard. Mr. Maitland explained in a confidential tone to Lady Whitby, that one of the *entrées* was not what it should be. Lady Henry Mansel admired the silver ornaments ; and Lord Henry and Lord Clermont talked of Newmarket and Melton.

The Duchess of Bolton said little : she listened patiently to all Lord Whitby had to say, and upon him only she depended for conversation. From Dacre she received nothing but the occasional attention which good breeding demanded. The Duchess had barely acknowledged him on his first appearance in the drawing-room, and so slight was her bow of recognition, that Dacre had felt it impossible to approach her. He found no difficulty in assigning a cause for this marked distance of manner, and that cause was a source of great and undeniable mortification. He knew that she was the near relative and intimate friend of Lady Emily Somers ; and he instantly regarded it as an additional proof of the unfriendly disposition of her family towards him. But Lady Anne Preston addressed most of her conversation to him, and talked so brilliantly, and flattered so delicately, that he soon became animated and agreeable in return.

Dinner concluded, a swarm of well-dressed children flocked into the room, and a little amicable discussion was

carried on from the top to the bottom of the table, between Lord and Lady Whitby, as to whether the children should go to a side table ; and then the company, as in duty bound, declared that there was more than room for double the number ; and chairs were pushed, and children squeezed into places where their presence was an interruption.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

The long carousal shakes the illumined hall;  
Well speeds alike the banquet and the ball;  
And the gay dance of bounding beauty's train,  
Links grace and harmony in happiest chair;  
Blest are the early hearts and gentle hands  
That mingle there in such according bands.

BYRON.

So soon as the ladies retired, Lady Anne Preston became anxious to display to her own sex those powers of fascination she was so conscious of possessing, and which she so seldom used in vain. "My dear Lady Henry," said she, "I must congratulate you on Lord Henry's good looks ; I suppose I may venture to tell *you* how very handsome I think him."

Lady Henry looked pleased.

"When do you go to Melton?" she continued.

"Next week."

"Well, now, do exert a little authority over your husband, and don't let him overhunt again this year."

"I hope he will not," replied Lady Henry ; "but he is very strong, and thinks nothing can be too much for him."

"The fact is, I suspect, you are so proud of his feats, you have not the heart to put a check upon them. Now, own the truth ; does not the pleasure of his being considered the first rider of the hunt quite disarm your prudence?"



Lady Henry, who always thought whatever Henry did best was best worth doing, felt the compliment as it was intended, and Lady Anne rose immediately in her estimation. Then, turning to Lady Whitby, Lady Anne inquired how her new school succeeded.

"Perfectly," answered Lady Whitby, with great satisfaction.

"I was sure it would, for you are so indefatigable. Nothing shames me so much as a visit to Hatton;" and Lady Anne looked quite penitent as she said so. "Did you find much difficulty," continued she, "in getting the children to wear the dress? Poor people are sometimes so prejudiced, that they are not easy to manage."

"What is the dress?" inquired Lady Henry.

"The prettiest thing possible," replied Lady Anne. "Did you never see the sketch that was made for it?"

"Here it is," said Lady Whitby, as she unclasped her Album; "and I assure you I am rather proud of the idea. I think it may be the means of introducing more of a national costume amongst the lower orders. You see the hat is just the Lausanne shape; and then the white body and sleeves, with the short red petticoat, light blue stockings, and white apron, have an uncommonly picturesque effect."

"It must be very pretty," said the Duchess of Bolton; "but don't you find the parents object to so much washing?"

"They certainly did at first,—however, we have managed all that now, by paying for everything—we maintain the children entirely ourselves: they sleep at home; but we feed, and clothe, and wash for them. Indeed, I was very glad when Lord Whitby consented to that arrangement; for the school-house is made into a Swiss cottage; and the cow, and the dairy, and a kitchen, add very much to the effect."

"I dare say the school is in great request," observed Lady Anne.

"Yes, I am happy to say," replied Lady Whitby, with a benevolent smile, "we have daily applications to be admitted into this establishment, and it has done a great deal of good: not one of those children has received parish relief."

"That is natural," said the Duchess, who thought, however, that this fancy workhouse for picturesque pau-

pers was not likely to contribute much to the prudent habits and independent feelings of the poor. "Do you find," continued she, "that your gratis establishment has much affected the prosperity of other schools."

"Yes," replied Lady Whitby, exultingly: "nothing can be so triumphant as mine; the poor people like it so much. Dame Trotter told me, yesterday, she was losing her pupils; for that they all hoped to get their children into my Lady's school, and they preferred sending them to none, for the chance of being admitted."

"You will soon be obliged to enlarge your pretty cottage," said Lady Anne.

"No; do build another, and let it be like those in Tyrol," added Lady Henry.

"Really," said Lady Whitby, in her most sensible tone of voice, "I must think of some such plan; for it is not only very gratifying to see that sort of dependence upon the higher orders, but it is so very desirable to encourage the feeling."

"I think, my dear Duchess, you must be tired with your drive this morning," said Lady Anne, who quickly perceived that the Duchess of Bolton's opinions were not in accordance with those of Lady Whitby: "do let me give you a footstool."

The Duchess looked shocked, and placed her feet on the stool.

"I am afraid you have not been quite well lately: you must excuse my saying so, but I think you look a little pale to-night."

The Duchess had no objection to be thought an invalid, for delicate health often served as an excuse for real indolence, and she pleaded guilty to a slight headache.

"Whom do you consult now?" continued Lady Anne.

The Duchess named her medical adviser; but still no conversation resulted from these friendly inquiries. Though Lady Anne seldom failed in her desire to please whenever or whoever she wished, yet there were a few who remained proof against her attractions, and foremost in that number was the Duchess of Bolton. She read her character with a woman's penetration into the motives and feelings that actuate her own sex. She despised the restless vanity, and disapproved the conduct to which it gave rise.

The return of the gentlemen produced its ordinary

change in the drawing-room scene. There is generally some difficulty in passing the first evening of a country-house visit ; and it is upon these occasions that even the semblance of something to do, is an object to the unoccupied guests. Then it is that the pages of splendid Albums filled with nonsense verses, and bad drawings on richly embossed paper, are eagerly turned over, more to employ the fingers than to please the eye. Then does the click of the billiard ball sound sweet as melody to the ear ; and music becomes welcome, not for its beauty, but its noise.

The following day was one of considerable bustle throughout the house at Hatton. Nothing was to be found in its ordinary place : the bells went unanswered : the servants were to be met in all directions, moving furniture, and fixing lamps and candelabra. Every member of the household wore an air of importance and business : the guests were neglected ; the breakfast was late, and the dinner was early. The day of annual rejoicing had returned ! The forty-eighth anniversary of Lord Whitby's birth was to be celebrated by a ball. To exhibit the magnificence of Hatton House to his admiring neighbours, was an agreeable task to Lord Whitby ; and as no event appeared to him so deserving of commemoration as that of his own nativity, he fixed on his birthday as the most befitting occasion to open his doors to all who were able and willing to come.

Breakfast was scarcely concluded before Mrs. Ashby and her daughters were announced. They had come so early "on purpose," as they said, "to be useful to dear Lady Whitby;" and during the whole day they were allowed the enjoyment of fulfilling their intention ; for though Lady Whitby piqued herself upon her taste in arrangement and her never-failing activity, she preferred to fatigue herself by deputy. She liked to be pitied and thanked for giving herself so much trouble, and she found "those Ashby girls" (as she called them) never betrayed how little she had taken herself, and how much she had given to them ; consequently, they were always in favour upon occasions like the present.

The company assembled. Lord and Lady Whitby played their respective parts to their own and each other's admiration, if not to that of others. Lord Whitby hoped each successive party had found the night both warm and

light, as if he had had it warmed and lighted for them ; and talked of the improvement that had been made since *his* time in all the various roads by which they had arrived, as if they were more indebted for the change to him than to themselves. Lady Whitby told every body to whom she spoke, how fortunate they were in being present at Lady Maria's first appearance ; and whilst poor Lady Maria began to wish herself back again in the school-room, she heard with patient surprise her mother assuring every body how happy she was at her first ball.

Mr. Preston, who, being a resident visitor, felt that some share in doing the honours had devolved upon him, was seen busy talking to every one he knew.

Dacre had lived too little in the country to be acquainted with many, and was enjoying the lively prattle of Lady Henry, and the real vivacity of Lady Anne, when he heard himself addressed in a tone of familiar intimacy by George Saville. He returned the greeting, and immediately inquired if the Molesworths were come. Saville heeded not the question, but extended his listless hand to Lady Henry ; seated himself by her side ; and shortly obtained the acquaintance he had desired to make with Lady Anne Preston. Saville talked of London, and Paris, and Crockford's, and of every body he knew, or did not know, by their Christian names. He was, in fact, little more than a piece of ball and club-room furniture ; but as his waistcoats deserved to be quoted, and his sayings forgotten, his presence was always tolerated, and his absence never perceived.

Dacre rose soon after Saville had joined the coterie, to go in quest of the Molesworths, thinking it probable they were also arrived.

"If the coachman had not had perfect command of the horses, nothing could have saved us," said a voice, in a tone of great self-commiseration.

Dacre felt no doubt of his vicinity to Mrs. Molesworth, whom he found energetically describing to a lady all her alarms at the narrow escape of the accident she might have had on her way to Hatton. Dacre patiently awaited the end of her personal narrative, before he accosted her. Mrs. Molesworth received him with her wonted cordiality ; but neither her salutation, nor the kind and gentle smile of Mary Bingley, had the power at that moment to engage his attention. The ample person, and the full blown

turban of Mrs. Molesworth, had effectually screened from his view the lady to whom she was speaking; but as she moved, Dacre perceived that, leaning on the arm of that lady, was Lady Emily Somers.

Though he had long schooled his manner into one of indifference, to see her without emotion was still impossible. He was not aware that she was in the neighbourhood, and the surprise of thus meeting her unexpectedly, and the absence of Lady Kendal's chilling civility, gave him confidence to speak to her. He muttered some expression of astonishment at seeing her, which was answered, on her part, by an introduction to Mrs. Wentworth, on whose arm she was leaning, and with whom she had come. He then made inquiries after Lord and Lady Kendal, and learned that they preferred staying quietly at home with Mr. Wentworth, having confided Lady Emily to the care of Mrs. Wentworth. A few more sentences had passed, and Dacre began to think her more like her former self; and almost forgot, in the delight of hearing her voice and watching her countenance, the pain she had inflicted by her caprice.

It was long since he had ventured to offer himself as her partner, but he now lingered by her side, irresolute, yet almost tempted once again to ask her to dance. In another moment he would have made the request, but Mr. Maitland had just volunteered his services to Lord Clermont to introduce him to Lady Emily. The introduction was permitted—the bow was made—and in an instant Dacre saw her smilingly accept the arm of her newly made acquaintance to lead her to the quadrille. He was angry with himself for his delay, and angry with her for having accepted another; and as he leaned against a column, musing silently over the cause of his displeasure, his countenance bore testimony to the vexation he felt.

"You look a little bored with too much amusement this evening," said Lady Anne, in a playful tone, as she approached him.

"Do I?" replied he, scarcely conscious of what she had said.

"I know balls have little more attraction for you than for me," she continued.

Dacre said nothing.

"What a draught comes in from that door!" remarked

Lady Anne, as she shivered, and coiled her boa round her neck. "I dare not stay. Can you tell me where the tea is to be found? I have been looking in vain for the right room."

Dacre could do no less than offer to conduct her. When there, she seated herself on a sofa, and giving him a look of invitation to avail himself of the vacant place by her side, remained for some time endeavouring to rouse his wonted interest in her conversation. But she felt her efforts were less successful than usual. Lady Anne knew by experience the wisdom of transferring her attention to others, before the one she most cared to please had time to discover she could possibly fail; and she therefore took advantage of the entrance of Lady Henry and Mr. Maitland, to exchange her *tete-a-tete* for more general conversation.

"Dacre is *distrain* to-night," remarked Mr. Maitland, in a semi-confidential tone to Lady Anne, when Dacre had sauntered back to the ball-room. "Is he ill, or out of spirits, or—"

"Out of humour?" interposed Lady Anne, "for that, I see, is what you mean;—really, I am not in Mr. Dacre's confidence."

"Certainly, to judge by his looks in the other room, I should have fixed on your alternative," replied Mr. Maitland. "I introduced Clermont to Lady Emily Somers, to whom he chanced to be talking; and if I had offered him a personal affront, he could not have looked blacker than at her dancing with him."

"No wonder," replied Lady Anne, more carelessly than she felt, "that Mr. Dacre was not particularly pleased at the interruption. Few are more admired than Lady Emily Somers."

"I am much mistaken," said Mr. Maitland, "if Lady Emily in any way occupies his thoughts; I never saw him speak to her before, and I generally know pretty well what is going on in the world."

Of that Lady Anne was aware, and felt that it was to this knowledge she was indebted for his having thus addressed these observations on Dacre to herself. There was nothing remarkable in the tone, and still less in the words that passed between Mr. Maitland and Lady Anne upon this subject; but as Lady Anne always dreaded a rival, and Mr. Maitland made a point of knowing every body's mo-

tives as well as actions, it proved sufficient to arouse the jealous vanity of the one, and the prying curiosity of the other ; and both rose from their seats with the mental determination to discover something, if something was to be discovered.

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## CHAPTER IX.

Our operator, before he engaged in this visionary dissection, told us, that there was nothing in his art more difficult than to lay open the heart of a coquette, by reason of the many labyrinths and recesses which are to be found in it, and which do not appear in the heart of any other animal.—ADDISON.

DACRE again found himself in sight of Lady Emily. She had just returned to Mrs. Wentworth, and a seat was vacant by her side. The temptation was great, and he availed himself of the opportunity of again attempting to converse with her. It is never so difficult to talk upon the light topics of slight acquaintance, as with one to whom, under happier circumstances, we have dared to display those better stores of mind and feeling which intimacy can alone unlock ; and Dacre found himself not only reduced to talking of the weather, the room, and the heat, and the cold ; but conscious also that the observations called forth by subjects so trivial were rendered doubly uninteresting by the effort with which they were made.

“Dacre ! I wish you would dance,” said George Saville, in a tone of listless persuasion.

“Do be our *vis-à-vis*, dear Lady Emily !” said Miss Cecilia Ashby, with prodigious animation.

Both felt the awkwardness of saying they were not engaged. Miss Cecilia perceived the hesitation, and, alarmed lest she should be defeated in her object, added, with increased eagerness, “Lady Whitby is bent upon our having a quadrille at this end, on purpose that she may see Lady

Maria dance ; and it will be *so* good-natured in you to help us !”

Dacre viewed this request as a sanction to his asking Lady Emily, and in another moment his heart beat with tumultuous joy, as he once more felt her hand within his arm. The quadrille was formed ; and though Mr. Maitland used his censorial privilege to tell Lady Whitby that her daughter's wreath was too large, and her gown the wrong colour, she looked on with maternal satisfaction at the performance of Lady Maria's best steps. She informed the Duke of Bolton, who knew nothing to the contrary, that her daughter was Mon. —'s favourite pupil, and called his attention to the intricate beauties of a *battement*, just as if he had been a ballet-master ; and the Duke good-naturedly supposed it was all perfection, as her mother was satisfied, though he only perceived a plain little girl trotting about the dance, with some agility, and no grace.

Music and motion have great influence on the courage of mankind. Lady Emily could not disguise from herself that there had, as yet, been a degree of constraint in her conversation with Dacre, which did not accord with the resolutions she had long ago formed, and she now determined to shake off at once this conscious recollection of the past. Her spirits rose with the dance ; the excitement of the effort gave additional brilliancy to her beauty, and she became even more than usually animated. Dacre could scarcely repress the admiration with which he watched each playful smile ; but anxious to conceal the feelings she still inspired but did not return, he also sought refuge in the disguise of careless gaiety. The ease, at first assumed, with a little practice became natural ; and when the dance was concluded, Dacre ventured, under pretence of pointing out some picture, to persuade Lady Emily to accompany him into the adjoining gallery.

This movement was watched with interest by Lady Anne Preston. Her jealous vanity had been piqued by Mr. Maitland's observations ; and, as her eyes fell upon Dacre, whilst engaged in lively conversation with one so attractive as Lady Emily, her alarms were confirmed that a rival was in the field. It was at the moment that this unpleasant idea had occurred to Lady Anne, that she perceived Mr. Maitland was crossing the room to address her. We are all apt to believe that the thought which stands upper-



most in our own minds must hold the same position in that of others ; and as Lady Anne felt no doubt Mr. Maitland had something to communicate on the subject of her own meditations, she determined to betray no unnecessary eagerness to hear it.

"Lady Anne !" said Mr. Maitland, "I want to consult you upon rather a difficult point ;" and he looked as mysterious as if he did not mean to tell her what the point in question was.

"Then," said Lady Anne, "I will be paid *d'avance*, by your telling me who is that odd-looking foreigner to whom you were just now talking so earnestly."

"The very man about whom I want to consult you."

"Then it is imperative I should know his name and nation."

"He is not a foreigner," replied Mr. Maitland, "but an old friend of mine."

"I am all impatience for his name," interrupted Lady Anne, no longer interested in the matter.

"You will know his name," said Mr. Maitland ; "for though his reign in society was long before yours, every body has heard of Crofton."

"Certainly—as the sayer of good things, and the player of bad tricks—the delight of the social, and the bugbear of the moral," rejoined Lady Anne, laughingly.

"Half your description is just ; but take my word for it, Lady Anne, the rest is all scandal and prejudice : Crofton is a very good fellow, and he has just been asking my opinion as to the line he had best pursue with respect to Dacre."

Lady Anne listened attentively.

"Crofton," he continued, "though a distant relation, is the heir-at-law of the late Lord Hexham. Lord Hexham had never shown him any kindness ; and he, like the rest of the world, had looked upon Dacre as the heir presumptive. Lord Hexham left everything in his power away to his nephew. Crofton, of course, feels the injustice of this, but is anxious to show Dacre he bears him no ill will, and has consulted me about making his acquaintance."

"And why should he not ?" inquired Lady Anne.

"Because he is afraid, and not quite without reason, of being misconstrued by Dacre."

"Why so?"

"You will be angry with me for saying so, but it must be allowed that nobody views things occasionally more *de travers* than our friend Dacre. Still, however, I am inclined to effect an introduction."

"How right you are!" exclaimed Lady Anne: "but," added she, with increased earnestness, "do not delay the good deed; success so often depends on the choice of the moment, and this is just the sort of case when it is better to take a person by surprise."

"I don't know what has become of Dacre," replied Mr. Maitland, as if musing on this kind advice to lose no time in interfering in other people's concerns.

"I saw Mr. Dacre just now passing with some lady towards the gallery door," said Lady Anne; "and the presence of a stranger in these little difficulties may be turned to advantage by one who understands, as you do, the management of men and things."

"True," replied Mr. Maitland. "I see Crofton is disengaged, and I shall go on my friendly errand directly." Mr. Maitland liked the allusion to his worldly wisdom, immediately exalted Lady Anne into a woman of superior mind, followed her suggestion, and as effectually spoiled Dacre's *tete-a-tete* with Lady Emily Somers, as Lady Anne wished and intended.

It is not to be supposed that any interruption would have proved welcome to Dacre under such circumstances, but it was hardly possible to have fixed upon one so peculiarly unwelcome at that moment, as the introduction of Mr. Crofton; and though Mr. Maitland was perhaps satisfied with the result of his mission, the coldness with which Dacre received his new acquaintance did not escape the notice of Lady Emily. She withdrew the hand that rested on his arm, and retired from his side to listen to Lady Henry Mansell's eager commendation of her Parisian gown.

Mrs. Wentworth soon resumed the chaperonage of Lady Emily—the ball was on its wane—and they were preparing to depart, when Lady Whitby, as in duty bound, pressed them to stay. "It is too bad to be in such a hurry—Maria will be quite disappointed at your going away so early from her *first* ball—sha'n't you, my

love?" said Lady Whitby, appealing to her little frightened daughter.

"If you please, mamma," said Lady Maria, not sufficiently collected to understand what she was asked.

Mrs. Wentworth pleaded the common-place excuses for doing as she liked; and Lady Whitby added, in a tone of friendly forgiveness, "Well then, as you have promised to come with Lord and Lady Kendal to-morrow, before luncheon, I will say no more; you know we are going over to my school early, and I depend upon you, Lady Emily, to join our party; and don't forget to tell Sir Edward Bradford that there is a room at his service at Hatton to-morrow."

The ladies shook hands and departed. Dacre had overheard their parting conversation with Lady Whitby, and the half-formed resolution of escorting Lady Emily to the carriage was checked by the mention of a name with which so many bitter recollections were associated. He turned away; and seeing Harry Molesworth, was greeted with the unsympathetic exclamation of—

"Well! Dacre, this has been the pleasantest ball I ever was at!" and he looked as happy as Lady Maria was supposed to be. "Do tell me," added he, in the same light-hearted tone, "who was that beautiful girl with whom I saw you dancing?"

Dacre answered drily, "It was Lady Emily Somers."

"I give you joy of your partner; and you must have found each other very agreeable, for Mary and I were equally struck with the animation with which you were talking."

"My animation is seldom long-lived," replied Dacre, moodily; "and I have, as usual, found more to harass than to please me."

Molesworth had his own reasons for being in remarkably good spirits, and he had the charity to suppose that his friend had reasons equally good for being depressed; he therefore shook him warmly by the hand—just named the day on which it was settled he was to join the party at Hatton, and bade him good-night, without further conversation.

"All things must have an end;" and when dancers and musicians were equally exhausted, the birthday ball died a

natural death, and the company took leave of Hatton and its owners. Lord and Lady Whitby were, as usual on such occasions, all condescension, and ventured to hope their guests had been amused, with the conscious certainty of the desired reply. The Misses Ashby besought dear Lady Whitby to retire to rest; they were so sure she must be tired to death after all her exertions, both morning and evening; and Mrs. Ashby hinted to Lord Whitby that the county had wished themselves as many returns of that happy evening, as they had wished him happy returns of the day. George Saville then yawned; Lady Maria looked pale and wan, and by common consent the little group retired to seek repose from the labours, or to meditate on the events of the bygone *fete*.

The morrow came, but the weather was hopelessly bad. Lord Whitby never allowed any but job horses to go out in the rain; Lady Whitby was therefore obliged to abandon her drive to the school for that day. Immediately after breakfast, Mrs. Ashby and her daughters were allowed to assist Lady Whitby in the re-arrangement of her *boudoir*, and to discuss with her the sensation created by Lady Maria's *début*. The languid Julia did so envy her the enjoyment in dancing she had never felt herself; and the more energetic Cecilia said, that dear, innocent-looking white gown, *a la victime*, had become her so much, and that every one thought she looked so nice! and then there was something "so dear" in all her little mistakes in the dance! and Mrs. Ashby remarked it was "so delightful to see a mind so fresh!" and lamented her own folly in having brought out her girls when they were mere children.

The party from Mrs. Wentworth's felt absolved from their promise by the badness of the weather, and arrived not at the hour expected. Never did Dacre find a morning pass so slowly. In vain did he endeavour to occupy himself with the various publications that bestrewed the tables; at four successive games of billiards he had been beaten by Mr. Preston; offered to mark for Lady Anne, and scored her adversaries' strokes; tapped the barometer, then walked to the window, and wondered, so audibly, when it would clear, as to attract Lord Whitby's attention.

"No chance till four or five o'clock. They say I pique

myself on being weather-wise at Hatton, but you know one always understands one's own sky. You see to the right of those splendid old trees the young clump of my planting—well, till it looks light above that plantation, the rain will continue.”

The rest of the company resorted to the usual expedients for killing time on a wet day with better success. Some read—others worked—many talked—a few listened—all eat luncheon; and then the bang of the battledore echoed through the hall, whilst Lady Whitby volunteered her services to show the house from the cellar to the garret, to all such guests as were unacquainted with the superior arrangements of Hatton.

At last, Lord Clermont looking out from the window of one of the uppermost rooms, announced the arrival of a carriage with “four uncommonly fine horses;” but when Lady Whitby assured them all that she would finish going over the house before she went down to receive the Kendals and Wentworths, Dacre felt that his patience and civility were at their last gasp, and availing himself of the first opportunity that favoured his escape, he hastened towards the apartment where he expected to find Lady Emily Somers. His retreat escaped the observation of all but one; but that one was Lady Anne Preston: her interest in his movements had greatly increased during the last four-and-twenty hours, for during that period she had been harassed by doubts of the stability of her own empire, where she had hitherto thought it secure.

Dacre perceived that Lady Emily had already been pressed into the active service going on in the hall; he did not, therefore, proceed to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Ashby was doing the honours for Lady Whitby to Lady Kendal and Mrs. Wentworth, but became as intensely interested in the fate of the shuttlecock as though he really cared whether it fell or flew. Fatigue and twilight terminated the game; and as Lady Emily drew towards the group now assembled round the fire, Dacre inquired if she had been fatigued by the ball. Lady Emily carelessly replied in the negative; and then remarked to Miss Ashby what a beautiful *fete* it had been.

“It was, indeed,” she replied; “but no wonder, for dear Lady Whitby arranges everything so well—she has so much taste.”

"Barring the *cuisine*," observed Mr. Maidland; "I must really speak to Whitby about that: they ought to talk to the *artiste* himself—the man is discouraged if his works are not understood—there were two or three things quite wrong at supper."

"Well!" rejoined Lady Emily, playfully, "let us spare the cook a *rechauffe* of his gastronomic delinquencies; I feasted my eyes on the *tout ensemble*, and it all looked so brilliant that I longed to sketch the supper scene."

"Alas! Lady Emily, the dress of the day is unworthy such a compliment," said Mr. Preston, as he sighed to think how well he should have looked in falling collars and long curls.

"Dear! I cannot agree with you," exclaimed Lady Henry, "for I was remarking to Henry last night that country people now dressed so well, that one must spend double the money to look *distinguée* amongst them."

"Really," said Mr. Saville, "I thought the rustics were wonderfully well got up last night!"

"It was such a pity!" observed Miss Cecilia: "there were hardly quizzes enough to amuse us."

"It is grievous," rejoined Mr. Preston with gravity, "that those striking contrasts of habits and manners, to which our dramatists of old were indebted for their success, seem now to be utterly lost."

"There! Mr. Dacre," said Miss Ashby, with a look that was meant to be full of expression, "you see that Mr. Preston complains, as I do, that every body is the same."

"It is an awful charge against the age," said Dacre, jestingly; "but supposing even that caricature should ever cease, surely, Miss Ashby, variety may still be found in the study of character."

"Oh! as to character," rejoined Miss Ashby, in her most sensible manner, "I assure you I have taken so much pleasure in the study of all the characters one sees at the play, that I have learnt many of their parts by heart; but if, as Mr. Preston says, there can be nothing new on the stage now, it will soon be as flat as real life."

Dacre dropped the subject, for he was too good-natured to encourage poor Miss Ashby to make any more blunders; but he instinctively turned towards Lady Emily. The glance was furtive; and good breeding forbade the faintest smile to play around their lips: but their eyes

met, and the conscious sympathy of thought, that prompted this exchange of looks, brought remembrance of other days to Dacre's mind; and Lady Emily felt an unbidden blush rise to her cheek.

Then followed a lively succession of queries and replies upon the names and vocations of the guests; and the tall man in black, and the short lady in yellow, and the thin girl in blue, and the large girl in pink, and the gentleman with red hair, and the dandy in a wig, were speedily discussed and dismissed. Mrs. Molesworth's name was mentioned. Lady Emily praised the beauty of Miss Bingley.

"She is a good little girl," said Miss Ashby, "but there is nothing in her."

"She is sadly unfashioned," said Miss Cecilia.

"English girls never have *tournure* till they have been abroad," said Lady Henry.

"But," observed Lady Emily, "she has a countenance that says 'let us be friends,' that made me wish I knew her more."

"It gives me great pleasure," rejoined Dacre, "to hear you judge her as she deserves."

Perhaps Lady Emily observed a slight emphasis on the *you*—it was too slight to be observed by others—but she said no more on the subject, and took great pains at that moment to make each finger of her glove fit each finger on her hand. A little pause ensued: nobody else had ever thought about Mary Bingley; and Dacre and Lady Emily were conscious that they two had again sympathized in a feeling unshared by the rest of the company.

How strange to the indifferent, that trifles such as these could revive forgotten hopes in Dacre, and create embarrassment in Emily. But love knows no trifles: for love, at once the strongest and softest passion of our nature,—love, on whose breath the fate of nations has depended—love, at whose altar life, faith, honour, wealth, and power have been sacrificed—love, at whose shrine ambition has been lulled and fanaticism slept,—by some strange anomaly, can depend on the tone of a voice, and a glance of the eye—on the word that is spoken, and the word that is withheld—to indicate its presence, and preserve its existence.

## CHAPTER X.

Almighty vanity, to thee they owe  
 Their zest of pleasure, and their balm of wo !

THE morrow proved just such a day as Lady Whitby most wished,—unusually bright, and unseasonably warm. She knew that her ornamental cottage would look to advantage, and hoped that her guests would not be too chilly to admire. She considerably recollected it would not be fair that an impromptu visit should take the schoolmistress by surprise; timely notice was, therefore, sent to the school of her Ladyship's intentions; and the heart of the "Lady Bountiful" glowed with inward satisfaction as she announced to the company at breakfast, that there would be horses and carriages ready to take the whole party at twelve o'clock, to see how good and charitable she was.

Mr. Maitland knew better than to run the risk of being bored by joining a party of pleasure. Lord Henry Mansel accepted Lord Whitby's offer of shooting: Lord Clermont might have liked to follow their example, but he would not mention such a wish, for he was too much flattered by Lady Anne Preston's saying he could not be spared. Mr. Rowley and Mr. Preston were kindly promised the sight of a mound, which was close to the school, and which had certainly served as an encampment for the Romans—or the gipsies. Lady Anne Preston volunteered her services to chaperon the riding-party; and it was speedily arranged that she, Lady Emily Somers, Miss Cecilia Ashby, Lord Clermont, Dacre, and Mr. Saville, should go on horseback; and the rest be marshalled in carriages, pony chaises, britchkas, and phaetons, as best suited their tastes and nerves.

The seasons are often accused of not being sufficiently marked in our variable climate; but who is not ready enough to forgive this caprice, when autumn condescends to borrow a day from the summer? It was now the mid;



dle of November, but there was nothing to remind the gay party of the sad and sober feelings that poets and moralists would associate with the season of decay. The sun shone forth with unbroken brilliancy, spangling the drops that still lingered on the bright green lawn. At the bottom of the slope lay the broad smooth sheet of water, all sparkling with light, the brightest ornament of the cheerful scene, and the faithful mirror of surrounding charms. The deep-dyed evergreens that fringed its edges brought out in strong relief the lordly swan, now gliding upon its glassy surface, with his full-set plumage glistening in the sun. Even the leafless trees had borrowed beauty from the mosses that clung to their stems, and lent their boughs to the birds, who chirped gaily as they flew from branch to branch. The rich columns of the portico stood distinct and hard against a clear blue sky; and the absence of flowers was scarcely remembered, when the eye rested on the marble white vases that so gaily adorned the terrace and garden. Every body who had not been in Italy, declared it was quite an Italian day; and as Dacre beheld Lady Emily, standing at the door, equipped for the ride, as he had been wont to see her on their first acquaintance, and with that smile upon her face of careless joy, which youth and innocence alone can wear, he, too, thought of Italy. But Lady Anne Preston was thinking of him, and by claiming for herself his services to place her on her horse, defeated his hope of reviving the Neapolitan practice of assisting Lady Emily. In a moment Lady Emily had mounted on hers; and Dacre, for the first time, felt vexed with Lady Anne; for she had thwarted his purpose.

The ride was pretty; the conversation sometimes general, and sometimes particular; and the party arrived, soon after the appointed hour, in good spirits, and good humour, to admire all that Lady Whitby had to exhibit.

The school and its appurtenances were prettily situated at the extremity of a wold. Two beautiful little Alderney cows were grazing in front of the ha-ha that surrounded the buildings; and two little girls, dressed in the costume of Lady Whitby's own invention, stood on either side of the gate by which the company entered the enclosure. Though the cottage was a very successful imitation of the German Swiss, and the outhouses as closely resembled the chalet of the Alps, the necessity of introducing the family

arms and crest, as often as possible, was not forgotten. The arms, surmounted by the coronet, supported the corners of the large pent roof; and on the wicket of the gate—on the locks of each door—on the handles of the drawers, and the knobs of the shutters—on the centre of the table, the backs of the chairs, and the covers of the books—sat the owl on a coronet, the picture of dignified wisdom, and the family crest of their noble possessor. The Swiss custom of writing on the outside of their habitations was not omitted; and in lieu of the moral precepts, and other sentences, with which they adorn the exterior, was here displayed in old English letters, the interesting intelligence that “This cottage, erected by Henry Guy, seventh Earl of Whitby, at the benevolent suggestion of his wife, Charlotte Matilda Louisa, was presented by him to her, on the seventeenth anniversary of the day of their marriage.”

“I am so glad you had an inscription,” remarked Lady Henry, without reading it, “it looks so natural on that style of cottage.”

“And it is such a very nice one—so like dear Lord Whitby,” observed Miss Cecilia.

“It is very simple,” said Lady Whitby, turning complacently towards the group, who were reading, with some difficulty, the old English character. “Lord Whitby writes poetry remarkably well, and had rather wished to have it in verse, but I begged it might be quite plain and easy; it is so much better that the poor people should be able to understand it.”

“Well, Mrs. Taylor, and how are you all getting on?” continued Lady Whitby, addressing the schoolmistress; and immediately the door was thrown open, and exhibited four-and-twenty little girls, dressed in their best, ranged round the three sides of the school-room. Four-and-twenty little courtesies were instantly dropped in honour of Lady Whitby, and four-and-twenty more for the company.

“I hope, my Lady, your Ladyship will find the children come on in their learning since your last visit. Would your Ladyship be pleased to examine them to-day?”

“Do you attend to the school much yourself?” inquired the Duchess of Bolton, as the ladies sat down.

“Not in person,” replied Lady Whitby, “it is so difficult to find time for everything; but I send my governess, Miss Pearson, constantly.”

The four best scholars were then called up "to show," as Mrs. Taylor said, "what the others could do;" and the writing was thought much improved; and their needle-work very good, and the sums had been proved, and were all quite right. Then followed some miscellaneous questions, out of the book Miss Pearson had written herself for the use of the school; and though one girl thought the twelve apostles were the twelve tribes of Israel, and another said the seven wise men were the ten plagues of Egypt, and a third that the moon was only the sun in the dark; yet considering neither teacher or pupils understood much of the contents of Miss Pearson's little work; and, that to save trouble, the answers were generally repeated without the questions being asked, it was natural there should be some confusion in fitting them right, and a great wonder that the task should have been got through without more mistakes.

The examination over, the children were desired to fetch the cows to be milked in front of the windows, and as they tripped along the grass, Lady Henry was loud in her admiration of the costume, and declared "it all looked as picturesque as a pretty scene in a ballet."

"What has become of that nice-looking girl with black hair, I used to admire last year?" said Lady Anne, in an under voice to Lady Whitby. Lady Whitby tried to recollect who she meant; and Lady Anne succeeded in bringing the child to her recollection.

"I know, now, who you mean, perfectly—it was poor Sally Briggs;" then, shaking her head, she added, "that is a sad story," and turning immediately to Mrs. Taylor, she inquired if she had heard lately what had become of Sally. Mrs. Taylor looked solemn, and was sorry to say she had heard no good. Sally had complained bitterly that she was used to better food and smarter clothes than she got at home; and so, as she sang very well, a company of strolling players had persuaded her to accompany them.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Lady Whitby, "how provoked Miss Pearson will be to hear that all the pains she took to make that girl sing well, should be so wasted!"

"It is shocking, indeed, my Lady," said Mrs. Taylor, "after all your Ladyship's kindness, too, for her father, to be so ungrateful."

"To be sure," observed Lady Whitby, in a tone of

vexation, to the ladies standing near her, "it is very disheartening to meet with so much ingratitude; but I believe every body finds the same. Of course no girl is admitted into my school, whose father does not vote for Lord Whitby's member; but it happened that I had taken a fancy to this child, and had actually offered her father the vacancy, for which I had nearly a hundred applications; and, would you believe it? this very man gave his vote at the election, last summer, to one of those horrid Mr. Bartons, who always oppose Lord Whitby's interest?"

"How very disgraceful!" said Mrs. Ashby, indignantly.

"The fact is," continued Lady Whitby, "that some of those canting Miss Bartons wanted his vote for their brother, and so they took vast interest in the fate of his sick boy last year."

"Then, after all, he did give his vote out of gratitude," said the Duchess of Bolton.

"Yes! but all recollection of what we had done for the girl was forgotten."

"How abominable!" exclaimed Miss Cecilia.

"Poor little girl!" said Lady Emily.

"Ah!" said Lady Whitby, "I was very sorry for the child, and it was a great sacrifice to me to part with her, she was so very intelligent; but you know, my dear Duchess, when one makes a rule one must adhere to it; and I feel it a duty towards Lord Whitby, to lose no opportunity of keeping up the family interest."

Lady Emily now called Lady Whitby's attention to a little girl who had hid herself behind the door; she was coughing violently, and looked very ill.

"Is anything the matter with her, Mrs. Taylor?" inquired Lady Whitby.

"Nothing in particular, my Lady; she has only taken a chill."

Lady Emily placed the child upon her knee, and asked if she had ever had the hooping-cough?

"My dear Maria, make haste out of the room," said Lady Whitby, in great trepidation.

Some one inquired if Lady Maria had not yet had that complaint?

"Oh, yes! but one cannot be too careful; and she may take it home to the younger children."

"You are right, dear Lady Whitby," said Mrs. Ashby  
 "Cecilia, do follow Lady Maria—quick, my love!"

Lady Whitby told Mrs. Taylor she might send to the housekeeper if any medicine was wanted; gave orders that Lucy Black should not come to the school again till she had left off coughing; and then, with Mrs. Ashby, followed the young ladies out of doors.

Meanwhile, the Duchess and Lady Emily occupied themselves in discovering under what degree of illness the poor child was really labouring; and the Duchess felt her pulse; and Lady Emily so successfully coaxed her to reply to their questions, that they soon ascertained she was suffering from pain and fever, and required care.

Dacre looked with interest at the group. He quite envied the poor sufferer the caressing kindness of Lady Emily; and for the first time believed that the Duchess was capable of being touched by the sufferings and sorrows of others. It did not escape Lady Anne's observation, that Dacre's attention was thus arrested. She guessed, in part, the subject of his thoughts; and fearing to appear less amiable in his eyes than they, she immediately placed herself on the floor by their side, in an attitude of such perfect grace and ease, as no man could fail to admire.

In a few minutes more they were all summoned by Lady Whitby to walk a short distance to the place where luncheon would be ready. On arriving at the spot, they found three low huts, like the wigwams of an American settlement. In the largest of the three was the luncheon, set out in due form; and on each side of the entrance stood two tall footmen, who reached nearly to the roof of the building. "I built this," said Lady Whitby, "after the print in ——'s Travels in North America. We call it the Blind Orphan's Hut. There are none whose position seems to me to require protection so much as blind orphans," added she, compassionately; "and I therefore erected this building on purpose for the reception of any I might chance to hear of; but you cannot think how difficult I found it to meet with one that suited;—indeed, now I have given up the idea, and I assure you we find our wigwams very useful on occasions like the present."

People are always hungry in a party of pleasure; none of the company were therefore disposed to object to the use to

which it was now appropriated. So soon as the eatables were eaten, and that Lady Henry had sufficiently declared her preference for wooden trenchers over either silver or China plates, and that Miss Cecilia had repeated often enough that "the dear little wooden handles to the knives and forks looked so nice and innocent," Lady Whitby thought it time to propose a stroll through the walk of rhododendrons and azalias that were planted near their fellow-countrymen, the huts.

Dacre found himself immediately by the side of Lady Emily; they talked at their ease; but though their conversation might have served to remind one another of the power of each to give amusement, and to point to subjects the most indifferent, so little had it savoured of any deeper interest, that Lady Emily was almost startled at the tone in which he said, as they advanced towards their horses,—"Will you let me prove, Lady Emily, that I still remember how to assist you to mount?" Dacre felt that her reply in no respect differed from that which she might have made to any body else, in accepting a similar offer, but still it was accepted; and Lady Anne perceived that he was engaged, when she looked for his attendance.

No sooner was the cavalcade set in motion than Lady Anne inquired of Dacre, in a low confidential voice, whether he thought Lady Emily would very much object to their making a *détour* to the village where the parents of the sick child lived, in order to try and make them understand that no time should be lost in procuring advice for their daughter. The proposition so made ingeniously suggested the possibility that Lady Emily might object; and if it failed in neutralizing with Dacre the effect of her kindness in the morning, it at least succeeded in making him feel that Lady Anne was no less benevolent.

## CHAPTER XI.

Yet not your heavenly beauty gives  
 This heart with passion soft to glow ;  
 Within your soul a voice there lives :  
 It bids you hear the tale of wo.

COLERIDGE.

THE width of the lanes through which their road now passed soon divided the party in pairs, and the conversation between Dacre and Lady Emily turned naturally upon the object of their morning's expedition. Lady Emily talked of the picturesque beauty of the spots they had visited, and Dacre fully agreed to their merit as subjects for the pencil ; "but," continued he, after a short pause ; "surely, Lady Emily, you are not disposed to carry your admiration of Lady Whitby's establishment beyond the beauties of the exterior."

Lady Emily looked as if she did not, or would not, understand his meaning, and answered evasively.

Dacre was a little provoked at her reserve, and rejoined with some warmth,—“ People differ much, I know, upon the subject of charity ; but I own it gives me no pleasure to see a theatre of display erected on the poverty of others.”

“ I fear to know how to do good is often more difficult than we imagine,” said Emily ; “but,” added she, playfully, “as it is a part of charity not to think or to speak evil of others, should we not avoid personalities in talking of charity ?”

Dacre assented.

“Then,” continued she, “you know we must not begin by a pointed attack on our hostess.”

Dacre loved her the better for the observation and acknowledged its truth.

“You must not think me ill-natured,” said he ; “but

you know I always forget to be prudent on those subjects in which I take great interest."

"It is a subject that interests me also very much," replied Emily: "but then I have had so little experience that I dare not act on my own opinions; and even when acting by advice, I have sometimes reason to know that I have only done harm where I wished to do good."

"I bought my experience," said Dacre gravely, "at a time when I was unfitted for amusement; and one is better able then, perhaps, to sympathize with the distresses of others."

"And that led you to visit the poor?" said Lady Emily, inquiringly.

"Yes, but it was no merit of mine: at first it was not even matter of choice."

"How so?"

"You may have heard," he continued, "of the melancholy state in which Lord Hexham lingered for months; and when illness had made him unable to act, it fell to my lot to decide on matters that would not bear delay."

"And the wants of the poor are generally urgent," observed Lady Emily.

"They were the last Lord Hexham would have wished should be neglected, and it was therefore a duty in me to give them the attention which he could not give."

"I have always heard that Lord Hexham was so kind to the poor, I suppose there must have been many who were dependent on his bounty."

"Not quite dependent," said Dacre: "Lord Hexham was, in reality, what many are called,—a charitable man; but his great object was to teach the poor to be independent of charity."

"That must have been difficult," observed Emily; "and when the management fell into your hands, did you continue the same plan?"

"At last I did; but I made as many blunders at first as any man might be expected to do who puts to sea without a compass."

"Then you had not even the knowledge of Lord Hexham's opinions to assist you."

"No,—I had been so much from home; but I soon arrived at that knowledge, by comparing the tendency of



such charity as he always practised, with that which was promoted by many of our neighbours."

"But is it possible," said Emily, "to persuade the poor that the wish to see them independent is not the wish to save ourselves trouble or expense?"

"I found it was possible," replied Dacre, "though difficult and irksome; but I believe the fear of being misconstrued by others, as well as the poor, occasions a great deal of misplaced generosity. There are some who seem less afraid of the *on dits* when they do ill than when they mean well."

"And it does *seem* hard to refuse what we can spare to those who are in want," observed Emily.

"But," rejoined Dacre, "as there is, and must be, a limit to that which can be spared either in time or money, the more judicious the distribution, the more extended will be the benefit."

"I often hear long discussions on the subject of time and money," said Lady Emily. "There are two friends of my father's, both equally anxious to do good, and both determined to prove the truth of their own theories: and so one gives all his time, and the other his money, for the benefit of the poor."

"I suspect I should not quite agree with either," rejoined Dacre; "though I am inclined to think that the dispenser of money is more likely to do harm than the other."

"Then do you disapprove of pecuniary relief?"

"Not always," replied Dacre; "for as I think that charity is well bestowed in assisting the poor to bear up against the casualties and unforeseen accidents of life, money must sometimes be the relief best adapted to their wants."

"There I quite agree with you; and it has often struck me," said she, "on thinking over all I have heard, how impossible it must be that a uniform theory should be applicable to every variety of distress."

"True," replied Dacre; "but then," added he, smiling, "even you would find it as difficult to persuade the rider of a hobby that such is the truth, as to convince the madman, one has heard of, that horse-chesnuts will not pay the national debt. However, though one may avoid the delusion of a theory, one should keep a principle in view by which to determine one's course on every occasion."

"And that principle with you was to teach the poor to be independent of charity?"

"Certainly, to the utmost of my power. At least, I avoided the evil of teaching them to be dependent; for I had abundant opportunity of seeing the mischief that arises from such assistance as the poor can calculate upon as a certainty. They soon look upon such charity as their right, and regulate their expenditure accordingly; and if withheld, it creates more distress in the end than it originally relieved."

"Papa was saying the other day that he must give up particular donations at stated times, on that very account; and I am in hopes he will then appropriate some of the money as I most wish."

"And would it be impertinent in me to ask how that would be?" asked Dacre.

"Not impertinent," replied Emily, kindly; "and, indeed, I hope we should agree in thinking that it cannot be better employed than in establishing schools, which are sadly wanted in our neighbourhood."

Dacre fully agreed with her in the expediency of promoting education; and they talked of the different methods of conducting schools. Dacre also mentioned such other charities as most encouraged the poor to become provident; and Lady Emily showed so much interest on the subject, that he was induced to offer her the perusal of some memoranda of Lord Hexham's on the principle and regulation of the particular charities in question. The offer was readily accepted. A slight pause ensued; both looked thoughtful. The topic on which they had conversed was one rather to interest than to exhilarate; but whilst it seemed to have thus cast a shade of thought upon the countenance of each, there was a flutter of happiness, too like that of hope, which played, unbidden, round the heart of Dacre.

The day was fast drawing to a close, as they entered the gates at Hatton. The streaks of red light that gleamed like a fire, through the leafless wood, announced the setting of the sun; whilst the bustle and cawing of the homeward bound rooks showed that the warning beacon had been acknowledged by those whose wanderings depended on the broad sunshine of day. On emerging from the wood, the landscape, that all had so admired in the morning,

again burst into view. The objects were the same, yet how changed was the scene ! The dazzling brightness of the morning was gone ; the gay variety of colour was exchanged for one uniform tint ; the general sparkle that gave life to all it touched was withdrawn. The borrowed riches of the sun were now gathered round his throne, and left the earth in cold contrast with those shining caves of variegated gold, in which he sat enshrined, as he departed from the scene he had adorned. In a few minutes more, a long bright line that backed the purple distance was all that remained of the splendour of his exit ; and earth and sky seemed wrapped alike in that sad, but pleasing serenity, which belongs to unruffled repose. Emily and Dacre had watched the decline of the sun in silence.

"The progress of our life has often been compared with that of a day ; but where is the death so glorious, yet serene, as this ?" exclaimed Dacre.

"Or a life so cloudless as a day like this ?" rejoined Emily gravely.

"Yet I can imagine," said Dacre, "that such a life may be passed by those, who are born to be loved, and to whom nature has given the power to dispel even the sorrows of others."

His eyes turned involuntarily towards her as he spoke ; but she leaned forward to caress her horse, and their eyes did not meet, as she replied, with a slight falter in her voice, "I fear to expect unbroken happiness would be only to court disappointment : a day like the present may be an emblem of some bright passages of a life, but surely not of its entire course."

"I believe you are right," said Dacre ; "but," continued he, with increased interest, "you will not, I trust, deny that a day like the present, which has closed in giving hopes of returning brightness, is, to say the least, very cheering."

"But not the less delusive," replied Emily, as she pointed to a rising bank of clouds. "You see there will be no sunshine to-morrow. The weather has been unseasonable to-day, but these clouds will soon remind those whom it has misled, that we are in the chilly month of overember."

There was a mixture of the grave and the gay in the way

in which Lady Emily uttered these remarks, that could not but be felt by one who watched her every word and look : there was an earnestness, perhaps a shade of bitterness, in the tone in which she had said "there will be no sunshine to-morrow," that struck coldly on his ear. He felt he had been but too well understood ; and the lightness of manner, with which she concluded her sentence convinced him that to reply would be worse than useless. Another minute brought them to the door ; and jumping, unassisted, from her horse, Emily immediately retired to her room, without exchanging any further conversation with Dacre.

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## CHAPTER XII.

Whatever nature has in worth denied,  
 She gives in large recruits of needless pride;  
 For as in bodies, thus in souls, we find  
 What wants in blood and spirits, swell'd with wind.  
 Pride, where wit fails, steps in our defence,  
 And fills up all the mighty void of sense.

Pope.

ON entering the drawing-room before dinner, Dacre perceived not only that Sir Edward Bradford had arrived, but that he was standing by Lady Emily. He saw her look up at Sir Edward, with a smile on her countenance, and he thought she had never yet smiled so kindly on him. He viewed in Sir Edward the dreaded black cloud, and the painful conviction, "that there would be no sunshine to-morrow," now gained additional force. He turned towards Lady Anne, but she appeared too much occupied in captivating Lord Clermont to perceive his approach. Perhaps he was piqued at her manner ; for though he carefully avoided both her and Lady Emily, as the company arranged themselves at dinner, yet certain it was that never had a shy girl, and an ignorant tutor, less to dread from the conversation of a neighbour, than had Lady Maria and the

family pedagogue on that day from the agreeable, well-informed Dacre. Once and once only in the course of the evening Dacre approached Lady Emily. "Would she play a game at billiards?"

"Sir Edward was just gone to fetch the cards to teach her how to play at *ecarté*."

Dacre turned away: Lady Anne caught his eye; and in a tone half-playful, half-sentimental, volunteered to accept the proposal Lady Emily had rejected. No one knows better than a coquette the healing powers of an appeal to the vanity when the spirit is wounded; and she felt that her temporary encouragement of Lord Clermont's attentions had enhanced the value of her smiles.

"Preston," said Lord Whitby, addressing himself to that gentleman as he took his seat at breakfast the following morning,—“Preston, Mr. Rowley has just been telling me of the very interesting discovery you made yesterday.”

"It was, indeed, both unexpected and curious," replied Mr. Preston; "and I must acknowledge myself greatly indebted to Mr. Rowley for having led me to the spot."

"What spot?" "What discovery?" was instantly echoed by the Miss Ashby's, Mr. Maitland, and such others as did not already know.

The fact was, that when Mr. Preston and Mr. Rowley had walked up and down, and over and round the mound Lady Whitby had advised them to explore, and had said all that could be said about possible tessellæ and probable coins, Mr. Rowley had proposed, as in duty bound to his patron and himself, that they should proceed to the church, where the subject of his sole literary effort had been deposited; and then they talked of mullions and stanchions, and transepts and naves, of archivolt mouldings and clustered columns, of triforiums blank and quatrefoil panels, and of every other style and mark that serve as dates in architecture, till both were sufficiently puzzled, for each to be duly impressed with the other's superior learning; when suddenly Mr. Preston's attention was riveted by the faint inscription on a tombstone. He had discovered not only the name of an ancestor, but of that very ancestor whose place of interment he had most wished to discover.

Mr. Preston then informed Mr. Rowley that many proofs

were extant of his having existed some five generations back ; " but," added he, in the delight of the first moments of discovery, " till now I have never had any satisfactory proof of his demise."

The nature of Mr. Preston's good fortune having been explained to the company, Mr. Rowley expressed his hope that he might be allowed to see Mr. Preston's work when it was accomplished.

" Since when have you turned author, Preston ?" inquired Sir Edward Bradford with good-humoured incredulity.

" I am no author," he replied, " only a great collector of autographs and inscriptions."

" The autographs of remarkable men are certainly interesting," observed the Duke of Bolton : " perhaps one fancies, at the moment, that the sight of that which was the positive act of their own hand seems to realize their existence."

" Just let me know, Preston, whenever you are in want of any particular autograph," said Mr. Maitland, " and I dare say I can procure it for you."

" You are very good, Maitland ; but the fact is, I have such a passion for collecting, that I am obliged to limit myself strictly to particular objects : my present object is to ascertain the dates of births, marriages, and deaths of all my own ancestors, to obtain a copy of such inscriptions as are to be found at their places of interment, and to collect as many of their autographs as possible ; by that means I flatter myself I shall secure just such a family history as every man ought to possess in his own library."

" What an excellent idea !" exclaimed Lady Whitby ; " I think it is such a sensible thing to do, that I should really like to follow your example. Lord Whitby ! should you not like just such a book for Hatton ?"

Lord Whitby thought he should, and suggested that Mr. Rowley's assistance would be invaluable. Accordingly, Lady Whitby and Lady Maria, Mrs. Ashby, and her daughters, were busily employed all day in examining family pictures, and looking out for names in the peerage and baronetage. On Mr. Rowley devolved the task of threading intricacies of lineal and collateral descent ; whilst Mr. Preston was appealed to every minute for instruction

how to arrange and classify the scattered information thus acquired.

Lady Kendal and Lady Emily, accompanied by Lord Clermont and Sir Edward, drove out to call at the house of a friend in the neighbourhood; and Dacre and Lady Anne were thus left in the undisturbed enjoyment of each other's society. Lady Whitby never abandoned a new employment, and she could think and talk of nothing but the new book, and its projected contents. Most of the ancestral portraits having been fully discussed, the Duke of Bolton asked the names of some that hung in the room.

"That," said Lady Whitby, pointing to one over the door, "was Lady Dorothea Shafton, sister to Lord Whitby's grandmother."

"It is a very well painted picture," observed the duke.

"But what a dress to be painted in!" exclaimed Lady Henry. "I always feel so thankful not to have lived in times when people made such figures of themselves."

Lady Whitby looked grave. "I cannot agree with you, Lady Henry," said she; "I think there was a dignity and propriety in the style of dress at that time, far superior to the present fashion."

"I am quite of Lady Whitby's opinion," said Lord Whitby. "Every one in those days must have looked like a gentleman, or a lady, who had a right to do so: I only wish," added he, "that we imitated the wisdom of our ancestors a little more in that respect, as well as in others."

Perhaps Lord Whitby could not brook comparison with the living; so he spared his self-love, and displayed his modesty by always upholding the superior sagacity of his forefathers."

"To be sure," said Lady Whitby, "the dress was better suited to the dignified conduct and stately habits of the aristocracy of that time, than to the degenerate manners of our own."

"Certainly," rejoined Lord Whitby; "no gentleman in point ruffles ever thought of driving stage-coaches; and ladies in hoops did not think of waltzing. I can just remember the great aunt, whose picture you admired, duke, and her husband: they both persevered to the last in making no change in their good old-fashioned dress and

manners; and they have remained in my mind as the very personification of aristocratic dignity."

"I fear, Lord Whitby, you are inclined to think more unfavourably than I do of the morals of the present generation," observed the duke; "but we must remember that the manners and costume of the generation just within our recollection, and yet furthest removed from our own, have one great advantage."

"What advantage?" inquired Lord Whitby.

"That of being associated in our minds with those only whose follies we have never witnessed, and whom we have been taught to respect for their years."

"I am glad to hear the duke stand up for the manners of the day," said Sir Edward, in an under-tone to Dacre, as they stood together at a little distance from the rest; "for I can no more believe that virtue and decorum are the better guarded by stiff stays and powdered frizzes, than that honour and gentility depend upon the carrying a sword or wearing a bag-wig." Dacre smiled, and agreed; and for a few minutes more they continued in conversation.

There was, indeed, in Sir Edward's manner a degree of good-humour towards Dacre, that almost approached to friendliness, and which half disposed him, at times, to forgive him the sin of sympathizing too well in his own taste for the society of Lady Emily Somers. But whether from a certain want of tact, of which he accused Sir Edward, or from that over sensitiveness, which certainly existed in himself, his moments of good-will towards his rival, had seldom yet been of long duration.

"Lady Whitby, why don't we have some music?" asked Mr. Maitland, who thought the ancestral conversation had lasted quite long enough. Lady Whitby always attended to the dictatorial suggestions of Mr. Maitland; and so the Miss Ashbys were instantly desired to go and sing that pretty duet that ended in "*La, la, la.*" The tiny book and its illegible contents were forthwith produced, and the sisters sang just such a duet as is sure to end in "*La, la, la.*" The company nodded their heads when the quick part began, in the full enjoyment of the tune, and said at the end, "How national!"—and, "So gay!"—and, "So characteristic!"—"Charming talent!"—and, "Sisters' voices go so well together!"—and all the other things that are to be said upon such an occasion.



"May we not hear Lady Maria to-night?" said Mrs. Ashby, in an imploring tone.

"Oh yes! if you please; now she is out, I don't mind her playing in company," replied Lady Whitby.

"I assure you, duchess," continued she, as Lady Maria walked in meek obedience to the piano-forte, "that she is one of Kalkbrenner's favourite pupils: he has taken great pains with her." Whether the master would have recognized his own composition under the hands of his supposed favourite, was, to say the least, doubtful; for the music was difficult, and her alarm very great: her fingers ran wild upon the instrument—she crossed her hands to bang the wrong note—chased up and down the keys with all possible hurry and confusion, whilst her neck, face, and arms, grew more and more red from exertion and fright.

Mrs. Ashby remarked, what a rapid finger she has!" Lady Kendal asked if Lady Maria was fond of music; and the duchess said nothing. The Miss Ashbys having both said before she began, "Now *do* play, dear;" and, "You play so well!" and, "We shall all like to hear you so much," thought they had done enough; and as Miss Ashby had found an opportunity of gaining Dacre's attention, and Cecilia found George Saville disposed to vote the music a bore, and herself agreeable, they abandoned even the neighbourhood of the terrified performer.

Lady Emily saw her position, and felt for her embarrassment. She immediately rose from her seat, and placing herself by the side of Lady Maria, turned over the leaves for her, encouraged her by her attention and remarks, and succeeded, at last, in bringing back the wandering fingers into some degree of order. Dacre saw, and admired this act of good-nature; yet still he felt as if her kindness to others made the contrast more painful of her coldness towards himself.

It happened that Lady Emily was the last of the amateurs who were called upon that night to sing; and perhaps it might be that all which had gone before served as a foil to her performance, for certainly her voice never sounded to better advantage; and the superior taste with which she sang, was sensibly felt by those who could feel the charms of expression. She sang in Italian, in German, and in French; and all with the spirit, the pathos, or the liveliness, which their meaning and melody

required. One of the company named an English song he had once heard Lady Emily sing, and requested her to let him hear it again. She did so. The air was one of those low, simple melodies, whose fitness to the theme seems to heighten the poetry of the words ; and Lady Emily had the peculiar merit of pronouncing distinctly. The hopeless regret of disappointed affection had been the subject selected by the poet : not a word was lost ; and there were touches in those lines that came home to the hearts of all that could love. Perhaps, however, in music and poetry, as in most other things, the effect produced depends less on the abstract merit of the composition, or its performance, than upon the susceptibility of the listener's mind to receive the full impression of its power and beauty. The person who had asked for the song in question heard it only in a pleasing melody, sung with proper expression ; but Dacre saw in those words the reflexion of his own thoughts, and heard in that plaintive air the echo of his own feelings. His attention was so fixed, that he seemed lost in reverie. Her voice now slightly faltered. " Can she, too, then, have known the bitterness of neglect ? " His lip quivered, and he tightly grasped the book which rested in his hand, as the idea glanced through his mind. But, no ! her voice again is steady, and he once more abandoned himself to the sad fascination of awakened associations.

The song concluded, Lady Emily did not rise from her seat, but kept busily turning over the leaves of her music-book, as if in search of some other song, whilst exclamations of " How beautiful ! "—" How full of feeling ! "—" How very touching ! "—" How delightfully melancholy ! " were heard on all sides. Dacre said nothing ; but, as he turned towards the sofa near which he sat, he saw that tears glistened in the eyes of Lady Anne Preston. The big drops collected and fell without leaving a trace of emotion on her countenance ; but still he felt in those tears a bond of sympathy between her and himself.

" How I envy the calmness of those who *can* sing such a song so well ! " said Lady Anne, in a subdued voice, to Dacre.

At that moment Sir Edward, who had just returned to the drawing-room, approached the piano-forte, saying, " Lady Emily, if you have not already fixed on any song,

will you let me hear that very pretty *barcarole* you brought from Italy?" Lady Emily complied, with nervous haste. The *barcarole* was one that she and Dacre had first heard during one of their expeditions at Naples; one which they had admired together for its inspiring liveliness, and which he had afterwards succeeded, with some trouble, in procuring for her. She sang it with a degree of animation that exceeded what she had displayed before: her cheek was flushed, and her eyes seemed to sparkle with the excitement of the music. Lady Anne still looked pensive, as she remarked, *sotto voce*, to Dacre, "What enviable spirits she has! how well this careless gaiety suits her!"

"I cannot keep up with such sudden changes," replied Dacre.

"But you forget," rejoined Lady Anne, "that the transition is probably not so great in her mind as it seems to us. I imagine that the actress who has broken our hearts through a tragedy could perform in the farce with less real change of feeling than we experience in seeing it."

The observation told as it was meant. Dacre tried to convince himself that Emily was false and cold; and, though his dislike to Sir Edward was in no small degree increased for having thus helped him to come to this painful conclusion, his regard for Lady Anne was strengthened by the sympathy in taste and feeling she had displayed; and he did not again quit her side that evening.

"Emily! your hand is burning hot," said the duchess, as they parted on the stairs: "I am sure you are feverish."

"No, dear Caroline! I am quite well," replied Emily: but she trembled from head to foot as she said so; her temples throbbed, and a lump rose in her throat as she kissed the duchess, and again pressed her hand affectionately. She could not speak; but, hastening to her room her over-excited frame found in unrestrained tears the relief it needed.

## CHAPTER XIII.

All impulses of soul and sense  
 Had thrilled my guileless G  n  vi  re ;  
 The music and the doleful tale,  
 The rich and balmy eve ;  
 And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,  
 An undistinguishable throng ;  
 And gentle wishes long subdued,  
 Subdued yet cherished long.

COLERIDGE.

LADY EMILY was later than usual at the breakfast-table the following morning, and she found, on joining the assembled party, that the day had just been voted fine enough, by Lord Whitby, to see one of the show places of the county. Lord Whitby always accompanied his guests on this expedition himself, as it gave him an opportunity of displaying to advantage all such points of beauty, comfort and splendour, as might be deemed inferior to Hatton. Lady Whitby continued too much occupied with the new book to go herself, or to allow Mr. Preston, Mr. Rowley, or more than one of the Ashbys to be of the party. So soon, however, as it was arranged how all were to be conveyed, Lady Emily took an opportunity of begging Lady Whitby would allow the other Miss Ashby to supply her place. She had got a headache, and would rather be excused ; and was sure Miss Cecilia would like to go.

"Very well, my dear," replied Lady Whitby, who did not much care who went, provided the right number staid to assist her. "Then Cecilia shall ride instead of you. Mr. Dacre, you know," continued she, "has promised to take care of the ladies on horseback."

Emily did know that he had engaged to do so ; and for that very reason she greatly preferred to increase her headache in Lady Whitby's service, than to witness all day the increasing attentions of Dacre towards Lady Anne Preston.

This object once gained, Lady Emily made light of her indisposition; and, when called upon for music in the evening, she had no excuse for not complying. It was some relief to her to perceive that Dacre had left the room before she began, and that it was not till the Miss Ashbys had succeeded her at the piano-forte that he returned.

"Have we no chance of hearing you sing to-night?" said Dacre, as he found himself accidentally standing close to Lady Emily.

"I have already sung, till I am nearly tired," she replied.

"It is, I believe, always my fate to lose what I admire," rejoined Dacre; and his eyes dwelt on her for a moment with an expression of sadness. His look embarrassed her; and, to turn the conversation, she asked if Wenbury had answered his expectations.

"I believe it is very magnificent; but place-seeing, like most other premeditated pleasures, generally ends in disappointment."

"I had heard it was worth seeing," observed Emily; "and Sir Edward Bradford seemed delighted with all he had seen; but," added she, with a smile that tried to be gay, "perhaps you are too fastidious for enjoyment, and he is easily amused."

"It is natural that those who are happy should always enjoy themselves; but happiness is not always to be had at command," replied Dacre, gravely.

"Perhaps not," said Emily, "though the reverse is always to be found by those who seek it."

"The reverse needs no seeking," observed Dacre, drily.

"So one should think," rejoined Emily; "and yet I really believe that the art of self-tormenting is practised with more ingenuity, and to a greater extent, than any other art."

Dacre reddened as she spoke. "It is quite true," said he, after a moment's pause; "we do sometimes court the unhappiness that destroys us; and it is true, also, that such self-tormentors deserve to be held in contempt; you have made me sensible of the truth of this, and I feel obliged to you."

Lady Emily had no time to reply, for he turned abruptly away. She quivered from head to foot, and her heart beat

so quick, that it almost impeded her powers of respiration : but these were sensations that betrayed no secret, and she determined to make the effort that was necessary to conceal her feelings.

The evening's amusement concluded : the company adjourned to an ante-room ; and then, in the confusion of offering refreshments, drawing the corks of soda-water, lighting the hand-candles, and bidding good night, Dacre took courage once more to address Lady Emily. " I have taken the liberty," said he, " of copying for you those memoranda of Lord Hexham's, which you expressed a wish to read. You may no longer care to see them ; but in that case, you will, perhaps, not mind the trouble of throwing them into the fire : this is only the copy."

Emily blushed as he spoke : she had thought, till then, that, if an opportunity offered, she would endeavour to do away the false impression he had received from her previous observations ; but the cold and formal manner in which he had now addressed her, at once obliterated from her mind all such intention. She thanked him in a tone that too well accorded with his own ; and, taking the paper in her hand, immediately quitted the room.

It was not long after Emily had retired, that a slight knock might have been heard at her door ; but the knocker received no answer, and entered without further ceremony. Emily was alone, standing by the fire, her arm resting upon the chimney-piece, whilst her hand supported her head : her eyes were moist ; and she started on the duchess's entrance, as though awakened from a dream. " Is it you, Caroline ?" said she, as if surprised at her appearance.

" Yes, love ! it is only I," replied the duchess ; " so you need not look so startled : we are early to-night, so I am come to pay you a little visit. I wished to know if your head was still aching."

" I believe there is not much the matter with my head," said Emily ; " I am only a little nervous and foolish this evening. I shall be quite well to-morrow ;" and she hastily brushed the tears from her eyes.

" I fear not ;" I suspect your malady is one less speedily cured." Emily was silent.

" Emily !" continued the Duchess, earnestly, " do not

trifle with your own happiness. I have thought you unusually reserved of late; but I cannot see you suffer, and be silent."

"Oh, Caroline! you are kinder than I deserve," exclaimed Emily, as she threw her arms round the duchess's neck, completely overcome. I feel so degraded; and you must, you will, despise me, when I tell you how wretched I feel."

"Do not talk so, my dear Emily! how can I despise you whom I have loved from your childhood?" said the duchess, as she fondly returned her embrace. "But tell me, —is my aunt as completely in your confidence as she ought to be?"

Emily looked distressed. "No!" she replied; "there is one subject upon which mamma does not know my feelings." The duchess withdrew her arm from round her neck, whilst her countenance betrayed some surprise at this avowal.

"I told you, you would despise me," continued Emily, with increased emotion; "but do not—pray do not imagine that I have intentionally deceived my mother: deceiving myself, I have perhaps misled her; but now I have not the heart to tell her all that has forced itself too late on my mind."

"But why should you suppose that your mother would regret this change in your sentiments?"

"Can you ask me why? when you must know that such a change can only be productive of disappointment."

"I do not quite understand you," rejoined the duchess; "and yet I think we need not now speak in riddles. Am I not right in believing that it is upon Francis Dacre that you have bestowed your affections?"

Emily pressed her hand in token of assent.

"Then why not impart the secret of your preference to your mother?"

Emily shook her head, and said, "I should make her wretched, but she could not make me happier."

"Have you, then, reason to believe that either she or Lord Kendal would dislike or disapprove your choice?"

"Oh, no! they would not—they could not have disliked him, had he been constant or sincere; but what would be the feelings of my mother, so often as she has warned me against his fickle and uncertain disposition, to

find that the happiness of her child was at the mercy of one upon whom she cannot depend."

"But her advice might support you—her sympathy comfort you in this distress."

"No! no! it is too late now; I ought to spare my mother the unhappiness she wished to spare me. It is no more than I deserve to pay the penalty of over self-confidence. Oh, Caroline!" continued she, "you have sometimes laughed at me for what you called my pride; how little did you then think to see me so humiliated?" Then hiding her face in her hands, she gave way to the tears that struggled for mastery from the time she had entered her room. The duchess paused for awhile, and it was not till her cousin had in some degree regained her composure that she again addressed her.

"My dear Emily," said she, "I give you credit for too much good sense, not to say feeling, to suppose you would thus speak of an attachment you believed to be mutual; but you forget that you have given me no reason, as yet, to doubt the evidence of my own senses, in believing it to be almost more than mutual on his part."

Emily shook her head.

"You think I am mistaken," continued the duchess; "but I know not to what you allude in talking of his uncertain disposition. You do not deny his admiration of you at Naples; and when I think of our expedition to Lady Whitby's school—when I have still before my eyes his look whilst you were singing, I cannot believe that you do not still reign paramount in his thoughts."

"At Naples I was indeed happy. I saw that I was loved, and I knew that I returned the affection I inspired. He too must have known it; for those who feel alike understand each other quickly."

"But did he never give expression to his feelings?" inquired the duchess.

"He implied his attachment in a thousand different ways, but he never explicitly sought to know if it was returned by me, or approved by my parents."

"Not even at the moment of parting?"

"We parted without my knowledge, for he never took leave." Emily then related to the Duchess the manner in which Dacre had so abruptly quitted their farewell party



at Naples, and how she had hoped in vain that he would appear the next morning to bid her adieu.

"The fear of betraying his feelings might account for this seeming indifference," observed the Duchess; "but what reason had you to doubt his constancy when next you met?"

"None, at first. We met in London; it was very soon after his return to England; and the dream of happiness that had begun abroad, was, for a time, renewed at home. But it was soon over," added she; and her voice faltered with returning emotion.

"Dear Emily! it grieves me to distress you," said the Duchess; "but having been absent at that time, you know I am ignorant of much that has passed upon this subject;—tell me what awoke you from your dream?"

"It was plain that, once secure of my preference, he was anxious to withdraw those attentions that had gained him my affection." Emily then detailed to her cousin such circumstances, as, though trivial in themselves, seemed but too well to bear out the truth of this assertion.

"In what light did my aunt view his conduct?" inquired the duchess.

"Mamma looked upon it as the effect of vanity and caprice. She knew my feelings towards him; and she often said that he was vain enough to seek, but too capricious to enjoy the triumphs of conquest. She attributed his conduct the last evening at Naples to the same cause as his change of manner in London; and she warned me so repeatedly never again to place my happiness in the power of one so selfish and fickle, that I consented, when next we met, to avoid his society."

"And to that resolution I know you steadily adhered."

"Yes, during the whole of last season in London, I avoided, at first, perhaps, rudely avoided him. I should have been more civil, had I only been indifferent; but I suppose he was offended at my manner, and though we often met, we seldom spoke."

"Had you any reason to think he regretted this estrangement, or did you believe in those reports that must have reached your ears?"

"I hardly know what I believed. I could not help remarking that he looked at me, I might almost say watched me, with an expression of interest; and though his words

and manner were cold and constrained whenever we spoke, I felt sure he was not careless. Still the world gave him to Lady Anne Preston ; my pride was aroused ; I determined to be gay, and I tried to forget him."

"But without much success," said the duchess, half smiling, as she looked at her affectionately.

"Alas ! you see how completely I have failed," replied Emily, mournfully. "I quitted London, as willing to magnify his faults, and detract from his merits, as my mother could wish. The repose and occupations of the country made the time pass quickly ; I flattered myself I had overcome my feelings towards him ; and I was anxious only for an opportunity to prove I was indifferent."

"Had I been your confessor, Emily, I should have told you that such anxiety was, in itself, a contradiction to your indifference."

"And you would have told me the truth," replied Emily, "but I did not then think so ; not even here, at the ball, when we met and spoke, and even danced together, was I undeceived. I felt my spirits rise in his society, and I thought I was free."

"In other words," said the duchess, "like many other people, you mistook the excitement of hope for what it least resembles—the calmness of content ; but what has brought you, dear, to this sudden self-knowledge ?"

"You say you observed, how much he was with me when we visited the school ; there was something that day in his manner which forcibly reminded me of old times. We were sometimes gay, and sometimes grave together ; and I felt, as formerly, that his gaiety amused, and his gravity interested me, more than I was ever amused or interested by that of any other person. The suspicion then crossed my mind that my happiness was again at his mercy, and I blushed at the thoughts of such weakness. I still hoped to combat the feeling I dreaded ; another day convinced me I was too late. So long as his attentions were directed to me, I was happy, and could perhaps have continued to deceive myself as to the cause ; but I saw that his affections were really transferred to another. I saw that Lady Anne was the object of his devotion. I was no longer happy, and the veil that had blinded me, dropped at once from my eyes."

Emily's tears flowed fast as she made this confession,

but she composed herself sufficiently to repeat to the duchess the little conversation that had passed between Dacre and herself that evening; and with which the reader is already acquainted.

"Now then," continued Emily, "I have told you all, and I am sure you will never betray my confidence. I fear," added she, with some hesitation, "you will despise my weakness, but, dear Caroline, do not love me less now, that I am unhappy."

The duchess said nothing, but she folded her in her arms, with a look of interest and affection that spoke more of comfort on this point than words could have conveyed. Emily pressed her fingers against her eyes, to check the fast flowing current to which she had given way; then swallowed a glass of water that stood within her reach, and leant against the chimney, as if waiting for her cousin to speak. The duchess had been much overcome by all that had passed, still a smile played round her lips as she spoke.

"Emily," said she, "now that you have told me all, having 'nothing extenuated,' or 'set down aught in malice,' shall you be very much surprised, if I tell you in return, that it is my firm belief, that your fate lies still at the disposal of yourself and your parents." Emily stared, as if her ears must have deceived her. She was too much surprised to utter.

"Do you believe," continued the duchess, "that if Mr. Dacre declared his attachment to you, that Lord Kendal or my aunt would offer any objection to your acceptance of him?"

"I am sure they would never object to my happiness," replied Emily, with a sigh; "and indeed he was, for some time, a great favourite with both."

"And if he forfeited their good opinion, only because they thought him inconstant to you, do you think that he would regain their approbation if he proved himself guiltless of any such crime?"

"Certainly; why do you ask?"

"Because I would not run the risk of offering you advice that might be counter to their wishes."

Emily begged she would be more explicit.

"I have told you," said she, "that all I had seen here convinced me that you are the object of Francis Dacre's

affection. All you now tell me to persuade me to the contrary has confirmed that opinion."

"You cannot really think so!" exclaimed Emily, whilst a gleam of pleasure passed over her countenance. "No, no! it cannot be," continued she; "I cannot be mistaken on that point."

"Why not? You have been deceived in your own feelings towards him, and are still more likely to have been mistaken in his towards you."

"I fear it is easier to be deceived in favour of one's wishes than to be misled against them."

"True," replied the duchess; "but pride can mislead as well as hope: is it not possible that, in your anxiety to spare your own dignity, you may have impressed him too effectually with the idea of your indifference, or even dislike?"

"It is impossible," said Emily, "that he can so mistake me."

"Not so impossible as you imagine: remember, dear, you are naturally gay; your countenance is bright, and your manner lively; your spirits here have seemingly risen, and gaiety always passes for happiness. How should even Mr. Dacre know anything of that under-current of sadness, which only forces itself uppermost when the fever of excitement has passed? Who would believe that the Emily who now stands before me, was, an hour ago, the Lady Emily of the drawing-room, who sang so gaily, and looked so cheerful?"

"Yet I did not mean to be false or affected."

"I am sure you did not; but you have been playing a part that was dictated by pride. Why not lay it aside?"

"What!" exclaimed Emily, in surprise, "would you have me betray my feelings to one who actually prefers another?"

"That preference I deny; depend upon it, Emily, that Mr. Dacre's pleasure in the society of Lady Anne arises only from the soothing influence of flattery to a mortified spirit. He is piqued at your coldness, whilst Lady Anne never fails to encourage his attentions."

"But what can I do?" inquired Emily, despairingly.

"Simply appear in your own true character. Speak

to him kindly ; do not discourage his attempts to converse with you ; and above all, be careful to avoid the possibility of wounding his feelings in all you say or do."

"I wound his feelings!" said Emily, in a tone that would indeed have brought Dacre to his feet in a moment, had he been within hearing.

"Yes! I see you think *that* impossible," rejoined the duchess; "but remember it is my belief, that by forced gaiety and assumed indifference, you have already done so. Promise me, Emily, that you will no longer adopt this manner towards him. If I am right, you will soon see him return to his former allegiance—if I am wrong, you will, at least, have the satisfaction of feeling yourself blameless. You cannot be more distressed than you are now; and I think your peace of mind will be easier restored, when more positively certain of his coldness and inconstancy, than you have now any right to be."

Had the duchess spoken words of inspired prophecy, Emily could not have hung with greater interest on every syllable.

"You must know," she replied, "that the task you impose will be only too easy to perform."

"Then," rejoined the duchess, "arm yourself only against the possible disappointment of finding that I am mistaken, and you in the right.

"That disappointment cannot be worse, as you justly observed, than my present distress."

"Now, then, good-night!" said the duchess, as she arose to depart. "Try to compose yourself to sleep; and to-morrow will, I hope, give birth to happier thoughts than those that have of late taken possession of your mind."

"How can I ever thank you enough for all your kindness?" said Emily, as she warmly returned her cousin's embrace: "but," added she, "I dare not—will not—indulge in hope!"

Such were her words as the duchess quitted her room, but the expression which played on her face as she spoke, was not that which sat fixed upon her countenance when the duchess had entered.

## CHAPTER XIV.

The inquietudes of fear, like lesser streams  
 Still flowing, still were lost in those of love;  
 So love grew mightier from the fear ; and nature  
 Fleeing from pain, shelter'd herself in joy.

COLERIDGE.

THE blessings of sleep rank high amongst the blessings of youth ; and Emily must either have been indebted to the soothing powers of a tranquil night, or to the reviving influence of the duchess's conversation, for the unimpaired beauty with which she appeared the following morning at breakfast. But few of the company had assembled when she entered the room, and none but the duchess perceived that she was somewhat paler, more thoughtful, and more nervous than usual.

Each time the door opened to admit a fresh descended guest, Emily felt sure it was Dacre ; and there was a consciousness that made her dread his presence; and yet an anxiety that he should appear, which almost caused her to start at each approaching footstep : nor could she raise her eyes, till she knew by the voice that it was some more indifferent person who had entered. Every place at the breakfast-table was now occupied, save one. The vacant seat was next to Emily ; and it increased her nervousness not a little, to know that Dacre must thus necessarily become her neighbour.

Breakfast was half over when Mr. Maitland asked Lord Whitby whom he intended to fill the vacant place ? How strange it seemed to Emily that any one could forget who ought to be there ! Nor did Mr. Maitland forget ; he only thought Lord Whitby might require some information respecting his guests.

" I expect no one," replied Lord Whitby, who happened

to be as well informed as Mr. Maitland on the subject ; "it was laid for Dacre, but he is gone."

"Gone!" exclaimed several voices ; and when did he go ?"

"Early this morning," said Lord Whitby.

"What a sudden flight !" said Mr. Preston.

"I am so sorry he is gone," said Lady Henry.

"I am sure he had no intention yesterday of going away to-day," said Mrs. Ashby ; who thought he had certainly talked a little more of late to her eldest daughter, and did not approve of his departure.

"When did he tell you he was going ?" enquired Lady Whitby.

"Last night, just before we went to bed," replied Lord Whitby. "He took leave of me, saying, he was sorry to be obliged to go away so abruptly, but that he must be in London to-morrow on particular business."

"All men make the excuse of having business to transact," said Lady Henry, laughing ; "but I don't believe they ever do any. How I should like to know what can have taken him away in such a hurry."

"Nothing very pleasant, I fear," observed Lord Whitby ; "for he seemed very low, and looked so ill that I thought his particular business might be to get home, before he was laid up."

"No ! no ! it was not *that* ; I believe I know the reason," said Mr. Maitland, looking as significant as if he did. "I heard what he said to you last night, and it puzzled me amazingly to make out why he went ; but I was up early this morning, and I understand it now."

Mr. Maitland was pressed to explain, which was just what he wished.

"Crofton comes here to-day," said he ; "and I fancy he has no friendly feelings towards him. I introduced them to each other at the ball. Dacre was very ungracious in his manner then ; and when I asked him this morning if he knew that Crofton was expected here to-day, it was very evident that he had no wish to meet him."

Nobody doubted the probability of this explanation of Dacre's movements ; and the rest of the company had only therefore to comment upon the fact of his having gone away because Mr. Crofton was coming. Then came the

remarks on looks, manners, disposition, &c. that are sure to follow the mention of a departed guest.

Lady Henry said Mr. Dacre was very good-looking.

Mr. Preston thought him well-informed.

Miss Ashby thought he improved on acquaintance.

Lord Clermont allowed him "a good seat on horse-back;" and Lord Henry pronounced him "a capital shot."

The Duke of Bolton said he liked all he had seen of him; and Lady Anne, with apparent nonchalance, observed that he was "very agreeable, though very uncertain."

Mrs. Ashby waited to hear what Lady Whitby would say; and as her Ladyship declared "she could not quite make him out," Mrs. Ashby thought "he was very odd."

"He is a very odd-tempered fellow," observed Mr. Maitland; "one never can be sure of him; he sometimes looks half offended when one means to do him a kindness."

"I have always heard he is very capricious," said Miss Cecilia.

"I think he *is* capricious," said Lord Kendal: "at Naples we saw a great deal of him; and I thought him a very clever agreeable young man, but I have lost sight of him now. He has left us off, Lady Kendal, I think, hasn't he?"

"I suppose so, unless we have left him off," replied Lady Kendal, slightly colouring; "we seldom meet now."

These observations were not lost on Lady Anne.

"I wonder he don't marry," said Mrs. Ashby, just to see if other people thought he would.

"He is not a marrying man," replied Mr. Maitland.

"I should think not," rejoined Lady Anne; "I have so often heard him say things which implied his preference of a single life: so many men prefer what they call their liberty, and he is quite one to enjoy being independent."

"Well!" exclaimed Sir Edward, laughingly, "I see it is no joke for a man to go away from a country-house, and leave his character behind him. I suppose sudden departures, like sudden deaths, demand an inquest; and within five minutes we have been able, I think, to pass sentence on the character, motives, and intentions of our absent friend. I only hope nobody expects me to go away from Hatton; for I fairly own myself afraid of being tried by such a penetrating jury."



Sir Edward's observations proved a good-humoured check to ill-natured remarks, and conversation flowed easily into other channels, more free from the rocks and shallows of which personal discussions must ever be in danger.

Those only who have felt, as Emily did feel, from the moment that Dacre's name had been mentioned, can fully appreciate the subdued misery she endured. The hope that had cheered her first waking that morning had been rudely crushed, when Lord Whitby announced the departure of her lover. Her mind was ill fortified to bear the tone of careless praise or undeserved censure, which indifference or ignorance suggested; and she knew that every unfavourable word that was uttered, must tend to confirm her mother's impression of his inconstancy. The knowledge of our thoughts being read by another, often adds to the difficulty of resisting their influence; and Emily therefore found, at this moment of trial, that even the consciousness of the duchess's sympathy only added to her embarrassment.

The duchess was, however, a comfort to her cousin. She was the first to rise from breakfast; and, by calling her attention to a flower in the adjoining conservatory, she not only afforded Emily the readiest means of quitting the table, but gave herself the opportunity of proposing that they should take a *tete-a-tete* walk. The walk was long; and though the subject did not vary, conversation never flagged.

"Perhaps, after all," said Emily, as they returned towards the house, "I ought to think it better that he should be away. Admiring Lady Anne, as he does, it is very natural that he should not wish to marry."

"Then you still persist in your belief of his admiration for Lady Anne?" inquired the duchess.

"Yes," replied she, mournfully; "indeed I think it almost impossible that he should not be fascinated by one so fascinating."

"I confess," said the duchess, "she has no charm for me."

"My dear Caroline!" exclaimed Emily, in a tone of unfeigned astonishment, "that you should not always approve of her, I can, of course, understand; but surely you cannot be insensible to her beauty; or to that peculiar

charm of voice and manner, and that extraordinary power of adapting her conversation to the tastes of others, which have made me feel each day that I have passed here, how irresistible she must be where she wishes to please."

The duchess smiled.

"You see in her, my dear, every charm that apprehension could suggest, or that could justify the inconstancy of a lover; but I see, in all she says or does, a motive, that at once disfigures its grace, and destroys its effect: so I tell you fairly," added she, "that so soon as I am convinced that Mr. Dacre has ever really allowed Lady Anne to supersede you in his thoughts, I give him up. I shall make no excuses for him."

"Oh, no!" rejoined Emily with warmth, "you must not; pray do not give him up, even on that account; but," added she, after a short pause, "whatever may be the cause of his disinclination to marry, I think it is very clear, from what Lady Anne said this morning, that such is the case."

"It is very clear to me, Emily, that she intended you should think so. What reliance can be placed on words dictated by self-interest? Lady Anne is never natural; and she would sacrifice truth itself at the shrine of her insatiable vanity."

"Yet she seems so open, and her manner is so unstudied," observed Emily.

"True; and in that consists her power. Her manner is unaffected, though her character is false. She can well afford to be natural in externals, without endangering her objects; for the part she assumes sits easier in the garb with which nature has gifted her, than in any other she could devise."

That after the events of the morning, Emily should have appeared gay, or even composed, for the rest of the day, may seem strange; but certain it is that Lady Anne was never more completely guilty of playing a part, than was Lady Emily in reassuming her own natural character. But the last words of the duchess in entering the house, had been, to urge her to conceal from those who had no right to her confidence the painful interest she had taken in the departure of Dacre.

"His misunderstanding of your feelings towards him

may have occasioned his leaving us so suddenly," said she; "but I feel so persuaded that he is not indifferent, that I am not afraid of encouraging you to hope that all may still end well. Keep up your spirits, dear Emily, I entreat you. It will make me miserable to see you depressed, when I am sure there is no reason to despair. Depend on me; I will never commit you; but your suspense shall not be as lengthened as you now think, if it is in my power to shorten its duration. Next week we go to London."

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## CHAPTER XV.

True hope is swift, and flies with swallow's wings—  
Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures kings.

*King Richard III.*

It was just as the noisy waiter of a London hotel had removed, with unnecessary bustle, the last remnants of dinner, that Dacre was roused from a deep reverie by Harry Molesworth addressing him.

"It is time now, Dacre," said he, "that you should hear my story; and you will then, I hope, forgive me for having brought you away from Hatton."

Harry Molesworth's story was soon told. He had loved Mary Bingley ever since she was a child. He had called her his little wife when he left home as a midshipman; and his return was always pointed at to her as the reason and object for improvement. She must read well, and play well, and dance well, and mind all her lessons, to surprise cousin Harry; and Harry was duly surprised when he returned home, and would never allow that any other girl of her age had made so much progress. Again he went to sea; and his little favourite was to write to him; and as it saved Mrs. Molesworth a world of trouble that she should do so, she always congratulated

herself, when foreign post day came, that Mary was old enough now to write Harry the news. His absence was long; and time rolled on and made its usual changes, though Mrs. Molesworth never perceived them.

When Harry again returned, the beauties of the child had ripened into womanhood; and whilst Harry soon found in the engaging plaything, the still more engaging companion, Mary felt that the good-nature of the boy was exchanged for the devotion of the lover. How soon the parties concerned might have thought fit to reveal these discoveries to each other, may, perhaps, be doubtful; but Mrs. Molesworth, to whom the idea never occurred that the same people in the same house, and under (as she thought) the same circumstances as usual, should alter in their feelings towards each other, was the unconscious cause of their confession of mutual attachment.

She had informed Harry, soon after his return home, of an offer of marriage which Mary had received and rejected, a short time before. On the evening of the Hatton ball Harry saw her dance with this man, and saw also, by his manner, that, though rejected, he was evidently still an admirer. His jealousy kindled at the sight; he spoke to her openly; and no wonder that he found the ball at Hatton "the pleasantest evening he ever spent." The next step was to obtain the consent and approbation of relations to their union. Mrs. Molesworth saw no objection to the marriage, provided Mary always stayed, as usual, at Thornbury Park when Harry went to sea; but, unfortunately, Mr. Molesworth saw great objection to their marrying without the means of supporting themselves after his death, when he could no longer maintain them.

Mr. Molesworth was very kind to Harry on the subject, and so was his brother John; but their kindness was of little avail. Everything was strictly entailed; and they could not, therefore, advance much towards the income which Mr. Molesworth had named as the *sine qua non* of his consent. Their hopes now depended on the assistance of Mary Bingley's nearest living relation; and it was determined, therefore, that application should be made to him in this hour of need. Mrs. Molesworth and Mr. Bingley had been first cousins; and, on the untimely death of both Mr. Bingley and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth had offered at once to take charge of the

poor little orphan Mary. The offer was gladly accepted by her maternal uncle, Mr. Wakefield, on whose care she had the greater claim of nearer relationship.

Mr. Wakefield, was a retired merchant, rich and childless. He had always expressed himself with interest and kindness towards Mary, and had never yet been called upon to give those more substantial proofs of affection which she received in the disinterested protection of the Molesworths. Mr. Molesworth thought the present a fit opportunity to apply to him, therefore, in her behalf. He wrote to him explicitly, and entertained good hope of a favourable reply. No reply came. The suspense was painful; but Harry and Mary were certain the letter or its answer had miscarried. The post must be in fault; and Mr. Molesworth was earnestly entreated to write again. Mr. Molesworth did so; but, less convinced than the lovers of the fallibility of the post office, he deemed it better they should separate whilst their fate was still pending; and Mary found herself obliged to fulfil an old engagement of visiting the loquacious Mrs. Plummer, at the very moment she least wished to quit Thornbury Park.

Mrs. Molesworth saw no necessity for thus deranging the family. She thought her husband had never been so provoking since the time he insisted on sending the boys off to school. But Mr. Molesworth was firm; and Harry and Mary were doomed to wait in anxious expectation of Mr. Wakefield's reply, uncheered by the comfort of each other's society. An answer had been requested by return of post; but the return of post brought no answer. Harry now determined to come up to London, and discover, if possible, the cause of this silence. His first step was to ascertain that the old man was still alive, and had not changed his residence; but it was not so easy to determine the best way of obtaining the wished-for reply.

In this dilemma he wrote such a letter to Dacre as decided him to leave Hatton and join his friend in London. Had Lady Emily been more kind, the task would have been more difficult: but the post arrived in the evening at Hatton; and, whilst wavering in his mind as to the time he should fix for his departure, his feelings were wounded by a slight misconstruction of her words. He resolved, at

once, to quit Lord Whitby's before he saw her again, and to hasten to London without further delay.

Harry Molesworth was both grateful and surprised at the degree of alacrity with which Dacre had answered his summons; and, in the first pleasure of his arrival, he was almost ready to believe, with the sanguine superstition of a sailor, that the tide of good fortune had already begun to set in his favour. But the case was too serious to admit of delusion; and plan after plan was devised and rejected for assailing Mr. Wakefield with a third application. At last, before the friends separated for the night, it was determined that Dacre should, if possible, obtain a personal interview with Mr. Wakefield. The excitement of serving his friend had a cheering effect upon Dacre, and in some degree warded off the depression which the result of his visit to Hatton was but too well calculated to produce. He was all activity in the cause; and the following morning he announced himself betimes to Molesworth, as ready prepared to be the bearer of a note of introduction from him to Mr. Wakefield, at whatever hour he deemed best for the object of finding him at home.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

Oh! sir, you are old;  
Nature in you stands on the very verge  
Of her confines. You should be ruled and led  
By some discretion that discerns your state  
Better than you yourself.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was about the middle of the day when Dacre found himself at the door of a brown brick villa on the outskirts of the town. Mr. Wakefield was the creature of habit; and as he had found it convenient, when daily engaged in business, to reside in one of the many roads that lead to the east end of London, it had never occurred to him, when

his occupation was gone, to change either his residence, or his belief that the desideratum of life was an easy and constant communication with Tower Hill or the Elephant and Castle. The door was opened by a thickset footboy, whose ill-fitting livery suggested the idea that he had just stepped into the gaudy-coloured clothes of his taller predecessor, without any regard to the variety in human form. In answer to the question of, whether Mr. Wakefield was at home, the boy said he "would go and ask master."—"Master said he was at home;" and, whilst Mr. Wakefield was carefully conning over the note and the card which Dacre had sent in, by way of introduction, the footboy was desired to show "the gentleman" into the drawing-room, with the comforting assurance that "Master will be with you directly, sir." When Dacre felt himself so near the moment of interview with Mr. Wakefield, and thought how much the happiness of his friend might depend on skilful management during the coming hour, he began to grow a little nervous, and looked round the room and examined its contents with something of that desire to forget the object of his mission, which often creates a wonderful degree of curiosity in the waiting-room of a dentist or surgeon.

In the centre of the room was suspended a small glass lustre, carefully enclosed in a dirty white bag; between the windows was a mirror to show people what they are not; and over the chimney-piece was a portrait of Mr. Wakefield in the full dress of a Sheriff of London. Round the sides of the room hung various other portraits of the family; and Dacre amused himself in speculating on the degree of relationship they had borne to each other. An elderly lady with a long crimson nose, light yellow gown, and muslin turban, sat in her frame with great matronly dignity. A Miss of fourteen, in her square white frock, bright coral necklace, and glowing arms, stood screwing her face away from the robin she held in her hand. A large space was occupied on the other side by a little boy on a wooden rocking-horse;—the latter done to the life, and the child to match: and two smaller compartments were filled by a young gentleman in his college cap and gown, and a middle-aged man with his coat as blue, his waistcoat as orange, his buttons as bright, and the fit as true, as though the artist had been a tailor instead of a painter. The furniture

was scanty, and not very comfortable, and the tea-caddy with its leno case seemed a cherished and conspicuous ornament.

But Dacre observed, on looking round the room, that there were other ornaments which seemed rather to belong to the frippery of woman, than to the probable taste of the retired merchant. A table which stood in the corner was exclusively allotted to the sweepings and gleanings of ladies' bazaars and fancy toy-shops. A stuffed canary bird was flying out of its basket into the face of a large black velvet cat; and there were tempting fruits of stone and wax—cottages for work-boxes—castles for thimbles—and birds for needle-cases, with bodkins for their bills—ingenious devices for making pin-cushions useless, and pen-wipers unfit to be used; whilst papers, of all colours, were tormented into every conceivable form, for some inconceivable purpose.

Dacre approached the table; and, for want of something better to look at, cast his eye on this medley of tasteless ornament and useless ingenuity. Little did he expect that, even among the more valuable knick-knacks of tooth-pick cases, vinaigrettes, old watches, and bad miniatures, that he should discover any object of interest to himself. The foreign-like appearance, however, of the back of one of the little pictures at last attracted his attention, and he was tempted to take it in his hand to examine it more closely. But what was his surprise when, on turning it round, he saw, in the picture of an English officer, one with whose portrait he was perfectly familiar. He held it to the light—he looked at it earnestly—he tried it in different positions—so impossible did it seem that his eyes were not deceiving him, and yet so confident did he feel that he held in his hand the picture of his father.

The more he examined it, the more distinctly did it recall to his mind the well-known portrait of Major Dacre at Hexham; and, whilst his doubts thus gave way to the force of conviction, a thousand thoughts rushed through his mind with confusing rapidity. Should he find in Mr. Wakefield one who had been a friend of his father's?—if so, Lord Hexham must probably have been aware that he was so; and yet, though he was constantly in the habit of talking of those with whom his brother had lived on terms of friendship, Dacre was sure that the name of Mr. Wake-



field had never passed his uncle's lips. But all further speculations on the subject were cut short by the sound of footsteps. He replaced the miniature on the table; the door opened; and Dacre beheld in Mr. Wakefield one who was but too fast shrinking into "the lean and slippered pantaloon."

Mr. Wakefield was a thin spare little man, attired in a snuff-coloured coat—drab shorts—and white cotton stockings. His head, nearly bald, was neatly powdered, whilst the few straggling remains of his hair were bound prisoners behind, in the shape of a tail. His sharp-pointed nose, thin compressed lip, and deep-set eye, gave an air of acuteness and thought to the outline of his face; but the expression was gone. Age, or infirmity, had dimmed the brightness of his eye; and as his mouth relaxed into a smile, his countenance bore rather the stamp of imbecility than of pleasure.

Mr. Wakefield was in manner rather courteous—very slow—and exceedingly garrulous; and he dwelt so long on the fog and the cold and unwholesomeness of the winter, that Dacre began to fear he should never obtain a hearing in favour of his friend. At last, however, a fit of coughing came to his assistance; and before Mr. Wakefield had time to recover his breath, Dacre alluded to the two letters to which Mr. Molesworth had received no reply. Mr. Wakefield confessed that it had quite slipped his memory to read the second; then drawing from his pocket a large bundle of letters, neatly tied up with red tape, he deliberately wiped his spectacles, placed them on his nose, and proceeded to decipher the docketing of each individual letter.

"Ladies, you know, Mr. Dacre, do not always write very distinctly," said Mr. Wakefield, as he held up one of the papers to the light. "That word is quite illegible to me," continued he, pointing to it with his finger.

Dacre explained the word.

"Ah," said he, with something of a chuckle, "you young gentlemen are more expert at reading ladies' hands than we old folks; though, to be sure, I ought to know my good Mrs. Shepherd's writing as well as my own. Here they are both, I do verily believe!" exclaimed he, gently drawing Mr. Molesworth's two letters from their bondage. "I thought I should find them; for I am a very methodical man, Mr. Dacre."

It had certainly not occurred to Dacre that he was so.

"You must know," continued he, as he slowly unfolded the letter, "that since I have left off having letters of business, I don't always trouble myself to read those that come just when the postman chooses to leave them : but a friend of mine is so good as to look who they come from ; and she writes their names outside, and then they are neatly tied up for me to read at my leisure. So, with your leave, Mr. Dacre, I will read over Mr. Molesworth's two letters before we discuss the matter."

The entrance at that moment of a well-dressed woman, of between forty and fifty, made Dacre fear that the promised discussion never would come. As the door opened, she loudly announced it was "two o'clock." Then, starting, as if surprised at the sight of a stranger, she apologized for the intrusion ; saying, "I did not know you were engaged, Sir ; I only came to bring you your muffatees and comforter, before you took your airing."

"Thank you, Mrs. Shepherd—thank you !" said the old gentleman, rising from his seat to take them from her hand.

"I suppose," said the lady, as she glanced at Dacre, "I can be of no use to you now, Sir ! Will you send for me when you are ready to go out ?"

Mr. Wakefield promised to do so ; but perhaps he perceived that Mrs. Shepherd did not look quite pleased that her offer to retire was so readily accepted ; for as she slowly turned to quit the room, he changed his mind, and recalled her, saying, in a friendly tone, "You know you are always useful to me : perhaps you can remember, my dear, what you told me about Mr. Molesworth's letter. I had no idea an answer was expected so immediately : did you tell me it wanted an answer ?"

"No, Sir !" replied Mrs. Shepherd, drily—"you asked me to look what it was about, and I told you it seemed to be upon the same subject as the first."

"Well ! I dare say you were quite right, though I don't remember what the subject was—but didn't you see, my dear, that they wanted an answer ?"

"No, Sir, I did not indeed ; I should never have taken the liberty of opening the letters at all if you had not desired it, and it was not my business to read them through,"

replied Mrs. Shepherd, as if rather offended at the supposition that she had done so.

"Ah! my dear Mrs. Shepherd, I know you are are always too scrupulous by half," said the old man, in a conciliating tone. "It is not often, Mr. Dacre," continued he, with a laugh that savoured more of embarrassment than merriment—"it is not often that we have to find fault with the ladies for a want of curiosity."

Dacre said something, of course very much to the purpose, in reply.

Mr. Wakefield began to read the neglected epistles; and Mrs. Shepherd arranged the chimney-piece ornaments, and loitered about the room, as if doubtful whether to stay or go.

"It is a most important request of Mr. Molesworth's," said Mr. Wakefield, as he slowly folded the letters—"a most important request, indeed, Mr. Dacre, and one that deserves serious consideration: but Mr. Molesworth has no idea how many calls a man in my situation has upon his purse. I literally can never keep a farthing of ready money by me: isn't it true, Mrs. Shepherd?"

"Mr. Wakefield is too liberal, and too good to the poor, to have ready money to spare," replied Mrs. Shepherd, addressing herself to Dacre.

"No! no! my dear, you are very good, but you must not say that," rejoined Mr. Wakefield; and he looked affectionately at Mrs. Shepherd, who knew very well she had said just what she ought; "but really, Mr. Dacre," continued he, "I find money is very scarce now."

When rich men talk of their poverty, it is a bad sign for those who need their assistance; and Dacre therefore began to talk of the happiness of his niece, now depending on his kindness; and even to hint at the promise of assistance and protection he had volunteered in favour of the orphan Mary, upon the death of her mother. But it was clear that Mr. Wakefield did not mean to make up his mind in a hurry.

"These are not matters to be settled in a moment," replied he; "and you know, my dear Sir, that the wish and the power to be of use do not always go together. I must have time, Mr. Dacre, to consider well so important a subject."

"I beg your pardon, Sir, for interrupting you," said Mrs. Shepherd, in a more gentle tone of voice than she had yet spoken in, and bending towards Mr. Wakefield; "but I hope you won't forget Dr. Davies's orders not to trouble yourself about business whilst you are taking his medicines."

"Thank you, Mrs. Shepherd! thank you, my dear! how good you are to always take such care of my health!"

Dacre expressed his hope, that there was nothing in the present business likely to harass Mr. Wakefield; and tried the effect of throwing in some well-placed observations on the pleasure of conferring happiness on others, on the virtue of long and strong attachments in general, and on the particular merits of the individual in question: but it was not to much purpose, for Mr. Wakefield repeated his assertion, that he must have plenty of time to consider the matter. Dacre observed that his eye was constantly turned towards Mrs. Shepherd as he spoke; and it occurred to him that either her presence was the cause of his apparent disinclination to enter more openly upon the subject, or else that he was desirous of obtaining her advice before he committed himself to any promise. He certainly hoped it might not be the latter; but he felt that in either case it would be unwise to press the matter any further at present.

The conversation was dropped. Mr. Wakefield was sure that Mr. Dacre must stand in need of refreshment; and Dacre, having his own reasons for wishing to prolong his visit, required no pressing to accept the offer of luncheon. The news of the day was discussed; and whilst Dacre affected to listen to its recent effect on the funds, he was thinking how he could best introduce the topic of the portrait that had so deeply engrossed his attention previous to Mr. Wakefield's entrance. But nothing seemed to lead that way, and he was reduced therefore to take some more decisive step to obtain the desired information. He got up; looked at the clock on the mantel-piece; looked out of the window as if meditating a departure; stepped towards the table that was covered with knick-knacks, and after a short survey took up the miniature; looked at it for a little time very attentively, and then walked towards Mr. Wakefield, with it still in his hand.

"Will you," said he, looking up at him, "allow me to ask you——" He made a slight pause, for Mr. Wakefield looked askance, as if he was not pleased with the forthcoming question. But Dacre had begun to ask it, and was too much interested to allow himself to be balked. "Will you allow me to ask you"—he proceeded, though in a lower tone,—“I have been very much struck with a remarkable resemblance. I feel a great wish to know the name.”

An instant more, and he almost regretted that he had tried to gratify this wish, for the effect of the unwelcome question on Mr. Wakefield was much stronger than he at all expected.

"Not now—another time—another time, my good sir," said the old man, almost in a whisper, and casting a short suspicious glance towards Mrs. Shepherd, who stood at a little distance. Then shuffling up to Dacre, he took—almost snatched—the miniature out of his hand, and put it hastily into his pocket; looked again at the lady, and made him a sign to be silent. Dacre obeyed the sign, but it was difficult to be silent, when surprise, curiosity, and a thousand shapeless thoughts floated through his mind, and urged him so strongly to ask for further explanation. It was no small relief to Mr. Wakefield, that the entrance of the luncheon at that moment facilitated an immediate change of subject; and everything on the tray was offered to Dacre, with an alacrity that proceeded quite as much from the desire to say something, as from the wish to fulfil the duties of hospitality.

Mrs. Shepherd had for some time been busily employed in doing nothing; just as people generally are when they are determined to stay in the room, without any ostensible reason for so doing. But her back had been turned; and whether she had heard Dacre's question concerning the picture, or whether it was on account of her presence, that Mr. Wakefield had been thus anxious to avoid any allusion to it, he had no means of judging. He saw that her face was flushed, as she returned the parting "Good-morning:" it might have been agitation that had thus heightened her colour; but he felt that this circumstance could not quite be received as a proof that she had listened to, or been interested by, what had passed.

As Dacre rose to depart, Mr. Wakefield shook him

kindly by the hand, and said something about the pleasure of having made his acquaintance. Dacre thanked him, and expressed his hope, in return, of being allowed to tell his friend, that Mr. Wakefield would write to him as soon as he had considered the object of the visit, with which he had taken the liberty of troubling him. Mr. Wakefield followed him to the door; and, as if fearful of being overheard, he promised, in an under tone, that Mr. Molesworth should certainly hear from him in time.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

O! why did God,  
 Creator wise, that peopled highest heaven  
 With spirits masculine, create at last  
 This novelty on earth—this fair defect  
 Of nature, and not fill the world at once  
 With men as angels, without feminine.      MILTON.

It was lucky for Dacre's conversational reputation that he walked from Wakefield's alone; for his mind was completely absorbed by the thoughts and speculations to which his visit had given rise. We often feel disappointed, though we have disclaimed all expectation; and Dacre was disappointed at the result, or, rather, no result, of his interview. He had scrupulously endeavoured to damp the hopes of his too sanguine friend, as to the success of his undertaking: but from the moment it was agreed that he should call upon Mr. Wakefield, his own thoughts had dwelt only upon the joyful news, of which he was to be the bearer, on his return; and he was disappointed that his words, and not his thoughts, were thus verified. It was true that he could tell Harry Molesworth that Mr. Wakefield's silence had been accidental—at least on his part. It was true that he had met with no positive refusal from Mr. Wakefield; but it was also true that he had seen

the influence of a shrewd and cunning woman over the mind of a weak infirm old man. He was persuaded she was unfriendly to the cause, and he therefore regarded it as hopeless.

"How wonderful! how inexplicable is the power of woman!" said Dacre to himself; and he mused on the difficult problem of female influence. But he was not in charity with the sex at this moment; and he mused till he felt half inclined to believe that from that source alone sprang every evil in life. What was it that had now placed the happiness of his friend at the mercy of the dotard's liberality, but the influence of woman? What was it that would too surely close the old man's heart against the claims of kindred and of justice, but the influence of woman? What was it that made his own father forget his home, his country, his character, to bequeath disappointment and mortification to his child, but the influence of woman? What was it that had so embittered the sweets of social intercourse in himself? what was it that had given him that restless gnawing at the heart which drove him from solitude, and created loneliness in crowds? what was all this, but the influence of woman? And when he thought of the cunning look, the half fawning, half imperious manner of the woman he had just left,—when he thought of the baseness that can disguise its sordid objects in the attentions of female kindness,—his mind recoiled for a moment from the influence he despised.

It was but for a moment! Perhaps the recollection of the good and gentle Mary Bingley—her, for whose happiness he had that morning pleaded—would partly have checked the indulgence of such a feeling; but when the thoughts of another rose in his mind; when the radiant image of Emily Somers stood as it were before him; and when he remembered how he once had seen that face of brilliant beauty and sparkling intelligence turn on him with something of that imploring look of tenderness—that look which affection unconsciously wears, and yet seems to own the power of its object; when the soft low tones of her melodious voice and her gay laugh sounded in his ear, and he thought of that union of fancy and reason, that mixture of sense and feeling which characterized her conversation and disposition, he knew well the ties that bind us

to a woman's love—he felt the strength of woman's chains, but he forgot their weight and could not wish for freedom.

Then the picture! Dacre's thoughts naturally reverted to that extraordinary likeness. He had been so accustomed from his childhood to the sight of his father's portrait—he had looked at it so long, so often, and with so much interest—that he felt as familiar with the features and expression as if he had remembered him in person; and the resemblance between that portrait and the miniature he had just seen was so strong, he thought he could not be mistaken. Yet the embarrassment of Mr. Wakefield was so unaccountable, that he almost felt he ought to doubt the accuracy of his memory. Mr. Wakefield had evidently been agitated by his question. He had looked with anxiety towards Mrs. Shepherd; and had it really been the portrait of his father, how strange that it should be a subject of greater emotion to others than himself! What connexion could ever have existed between Major Dacre and Mr. Wakefield, to cause, after such a lapse of years, such trepidation at a mere allusion to his portrait?

Mr. Wakefield had had sisters. Dacre remembered to have heard the sad story of the youngest of those sisters. She had been decoyed from school, at an early age, by one of those dangerous heroes of school-girl romance, the gay and idle officer in country quarters. He soon tired of her society: foreign service had served him as a pretext to desert her—to leave her friendless and helpless, and to break her heart. He had never heard the name of that officer. Did a suspicion—a thought—a thought unframed in word—glance through his mind? Possibly! but he would not give it place; and in another instant he had begun to think the likeness to his father less certain. He was almost sure he had heard that, broken in health, as well as spirit, Mr. Wakefield's sister had died soon after her desertion; but he was not certain of the fact, and another strange thought darted across his fancy. Who was Mrs. Shepherd? He had regarded her as the interested dependent, but he might have been mistaken.

Dacre's speculations were soon brought to a close. He had reached the corner of the street that led to the hotel, and was instantly joined by Harry Molesworth, who had been too anxiously awaiting his return to delay an unnecessary moment in learning the result of his mission.



Harry Molesworth had been quite as hopeful as if Dacre had not assured him how hopeless he considered his interference would prove. He was severely disappointed, and almost as much surprised as Dacre himself, at finding this prediction so nearly verified. But Harry was of a more sanguine disposition than Dacre. We are always disposed to judge of the future by the past. Fortune had hitherto smiled upon Harry ; and he returned her smiles, and looked cheerfully on his prospects : but she had frowned upon Dacre—frowned upon him at that age when the character is most plastic ; and his imagination too often gathered round his future those clouds whose presence are afterwards realized by this very anticipation of their appearance.

Harry was still, therefore, hopeful, whilst Dacre desponded—desponded for his friend and for himself : but, happily, confidence begets confidence—and as the two friends sat together that evening, Harry Molesworth learnt that he might expect from Dacre, not only the sympathy of friendship for every obstacle to his love, but that still stronger sympathy, the real fellow-feeling, which makes us all so “wondrous kind.” It was lucky that they had been able to meet at this time, for no two characters were ever better calculated to be of service to each other under existing circumstances ; and if Dacre sometimes felt it his duty to damp the over-confidence of his sanguine friend, Harry Molesworth as often undertook, in return, the more agreeable task of stimulating the hopes of his too sensitive companion. Perhaps it would have been presumptuous in Harry to have spoken quite as flatteringly of Lady Emily’s liking for Dacre, as the Duchess of Bolton had ventured to speak of Dacre’s admiration for Lady Emily : but certain it is, that all he did venture to say was very soothing, and, like the duchess’s conversation, was well calculated to promote a better understanding between the parties concerned.

It had been agreed that Harry Molesworth should remain in town till they should hear from Mr. Wakefield. There are, perhaps, not more than two things in this world in which women can be even supposed to have an advantage over men : they are not expected to fight duels, and they are allowed the enjoyment of an endless variety of finger work. They are never obliged to give their friends

and acquaintance, who have had the pleasure of saying an ill-natured thing, the still further satisfaction of shooting them through the heart on a cold winter's morning; and when they have nothing to think about, or wish to get rid of the thoughts they have, down they sit, and resigning their whole souls to the cares of cross-stitch and tent-stitch, embroidery and tambour, bead-work and braiding, knitting and netting, chain-stitch and gobble-stitch, hemming and sewing, they beguile in busy idleness the tedium of vacuity or depression. Far other is the case of men. Drawing and cherry-nets are their only resource—for the former, there too often lacks the needful supply of talent—for the latter, alas! the encouragement of a sufficient demand; and then they are reduced to conscious idleness.

Dacre and his friend were just in the position to be sensible of this disadvantage; and so, like others with pre-occupied minds, and unoccupied hands, not knowing what better to do with themselves, they agreed one evening to go to the play. A mere chance had determined their choice of a theatre; and though the stage afforded but little amusement, Dacre did not repent of the choice. Towards the end of the evening he discovered that seated in the adjoining box was a person of his acquaintance, though he had not at first recognized him as such. He had sat for some time with his face half concealed in the large fur collar of his coat, till something attracting his attention at a distance, his head emerged, for a moment, from its hiding-place, and Dacre then perceived that his neighbour was no other than Mr. Crofton.

Dacre knew that Mr. Crofton had come to Hatton on the day he had left it, and however apparently unwilling he had been at first to make his acquaintance, he was now well disposed to renew it; and he gladly took advantage of a move in the box, which afforded him the means of placing himself next Mr. Crofton. Dacre spoke first: at another time he would have thought Mr. Crofton's manner repulsive, but his mind was wholly occupied at this moment with the thoughts of Lady Emily, Sir Edward Bradford, and the proceedings at Hatton since his departure; and his anxiety was not to be checked by an unprepossessing manner.

He began, as people generally do, to ask first after those who did not interest him, in order to introduce, with ease,

the names of those who did. He heard that Mr. Maitland had come to London that day with Mr. Crofton himself—that George Saville had gone two hundred miles off to a battue at Lord Somebody's shooting box—that the Mansels talked of Melton and Paris till after Easter—that the Duke and Duchess of Bolton were to be in London on the following day—and that Lord Clermont and the Prestons were still staying at Hatton. This last piece of information was given in rather a pointed manner; just sufficiently so, to let Dacre know that Lord Clermont was his rival, if not successor, in the smiles of Lady Anne. How far his vanity was likely to be piqued by this, must be left to the decision of those who have been placed under similar circumstances; but he certainly betrayed no signs of emotion, though Mr. Crofton fixed his eye upon him for a moment, as if he expected he would. Perhaps he hoped to stop all farther conversation with Dacre by this hint about Lady Anne, for it did not escape the observation either of him or Harry Molesworth, that Mr. Crofton was rather more anxious to be rid of his company than was quite consistent with good breeding.

Still more anxiously, however, did Mr. Crofton appear to avoid all conversation with a man who had followed him soon after he entered the box, and whom Dacre had observed to greet him with apparent familiarity. There was nothing very remarkable in the look or appearance of this person. His countenance bore the hard, reckless expression of a man of pleasure; and so did Crofton's: but there was also something of a sporting, underbred air in his appearance, that gave the impression of his belonging to a different grade of society; and which made the unreturned familiarity of his manner more striking. Dacre's curiosity was still unsatisfied respecting those, about whom he was most interested; and Mr. Crofton's indisposition to talk could not therefore be heeded till he had learnt something of Lady Emily.

Mr. Crofton had thought Lord Kendal an agreeable man—had no objection to Lady Kendal—was disappointed in Lady Emily Somers—allowed she was pretty, but uninteresting, like all other English girls, and would probably be as cold and formal as that icicle, the Duchess of Bolton, whenever she married. "Maitland says," continued he, "that Sir Edward Bradford means to marry her."—

"Means to marry her!" How the impertinence of those words grated on Dacre's ear! but he asked with apparent nonchalance whether Sir Edward seemed likely to succeed.

"You may be sure," replied Crofton, laughing affectedly, "I know no more about it than I can help—heaven defend me from the dull details of a virtuous attachment!—it won't do after twenty."

Dacre felt his colour rise, but he smiled, to show he did not mind; and said, Mr. Maitland's interest in flirtations of every variety did not seem yet worn out.

"No," said Crofton, with a soft sarcastic smile, "it is rather amusing to see that old '*Omnium Gatherum*' play at being fresh-minded—it is enough to kill one to hear him speculating upon whether Lady Emily's headache and pale cheeks proceeded from love or illness—as if it could signify."

Dacre thought it did signify very much, though he could not feel quite so sorry as he ought, to hear that she had not looked well—and said in a light tone, "he wondered a man of such practised discernment in other people's concerns, as Maitland, had not been able to solve the difficult doubt."

"I believe," rejoined Crofton, "that he is going to give himself up this week to the better understanding of this last bit of gossip; and by next week he will know all, I dare say, from the words of the proposal to the very fractions of the jointure. I told him he might save himself the trouble of doing more than asking the Duchess of Bolton how she meant to dispose of her cousin."

"Is she supposed to have such unbounded influence?" inquired Dacre.

"Yes," replied Crofton; "you know women are always led by one another; and I saw they were prodigious friends: the Duchess is just in the sort of position to give her power over the mind of a girl; and women love power as they love their life."

Dacre saw but little to give him pleasure in this assurance of the duchess's influence, for he had long persuaded himself that it would undoubtedly be used to his prejudice; nor was it by any means agreeable to his feelings to hear Sir Edward Bradford's name thus coupled with that of Lady Emily. But then Mr. Crofton had

made some allusion to her not looking well ; was it possible that she had paid him the tribute of regret for the pain she had inflicted ? Perhaps, after all, her toleration or encouragement of Sir Edward's attentions was only in compliance with the duchess's wishes—perhaps she was out of spirits—and he longed to ask the questions without number that rose to his lips. But to have given them utterance would have been to betray his feelings—and, indeed, as he found that he had obtained all the information he was likely to obtain from Mr. Crofton, he thought it better to take the hint implied by his persevering determination to originate nothing, and said no more.

It had not been without frequent interruptions from Mr. Crofton's companion, that Dacre had even learnt what he did of the party at Hatton ; and he could not but feel a little surprised at Crofton's toleration of his forwardness and want of tact ; but what surprised him still more, was to observe that this associate (he could not think he was a friend) of Crofton's was looking rather more intently towards him than is common for those who are unacquainted. Their eyes had scarcely met, ere the look was withdrawn—but it was repeated more than once, and Dacre felt half inclined to be angry at his ill-bred impertinence. Soon after Dacre had ceased to speak, he heard and saw this man ask Crofton who he was ; but instead of hearing, as he expected, his own name in reply, he heard that of " Mr. Molesworth." He then saw the glance transferred to Harry, and he distinctly heard the words " other," and " putting on his glove." Harry was so occupied at the moment, and there could be no doubt of his being the person designated. Mr. Crofton shook his head, and said in a loud whisper, which Dacre overheard, " I don't know—never saw him before." Shortly afterwards Mr. Crofton rose, nodded to Dacre, and he and his companion quitted the theatre together.

Harry Molesworth and Dacre returned home, and when they had talked over all that Dacre had heard of Lady Emily, often enough to feel sure that nothing could be deduced from the information obtained, they found that both had been equally struck by the manner and vulgarity of Mr. Crofton's companion. Dacre also mentioned the circumstance of his having asked who they were, but it was so difficult to assign any probable motive for Crofton's re-

plies, that they were obliged to come to the conclusion that Dacre could not have heard as distinctly as he imagined; and that Mr. Croston's toleration of such a man was only a confirmation of his reported love of low company. The subject was soon dismissed from their minds, for when they reached the hotel, they found fresh matter of interest and speculation in the shape of a note from Mr. Wakefield. The note was addressed to Dacre, and written in a woman's hand, though in Mr. Wakefield's name. Harry's heart beat quick, as Dacre hastily ran his eye over the paper, to gather faster than he could read, the purport of its contents.

"Well," exclaimed Harry, "what does he say? Pray, read aloud, and let me know the worst at once."

Dacre read it aloud; but the best or the worst was still to be learnt. Mr. Wakefield expressed his wish to see Dacre the following day, to talk over, as he said, the subject on which they had met before. He named the hour at which he should be at home, and the servant was desired to wait for an answer, to know if Mr. Dacre could call at the appointed time.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Methinks I should know you, and know this man;  
Yet I am doubtful.

SHAKESPEARE.

It will be easily believed by those who have ever been in love, that Harry scarcely closed his eyes that night, and that on the following morning he pulled out his watch almost every five minutes to ensure Dacre's punctuality.

Dacre was punctual and anxious—anxious as the warmest friendship could desire; but, as he found himself once more on the way to Mr. Wakefield's, his thoughts sometimes wandered from the more immediate object of his approach.

ing interview, to the recollection of the miniature he had seen in the preceding visit; and when he had wondered, and expected, and hoped, and feared, over and over again, on his friend's account, he could not help wondering, on his own, whether he should receive from Mr. Wakefield any information concerning the picture. Mr. Wakefield had said, "not now,"—"another time."—Would that time be now? He hoped it might, and yet he secretly dreaded the explanation he desired.

Mr. Wakefield was alone.

"Good morning, my dear sir! good morning," said he, rising from his seat, and shaking Dacre kindly by the hand; "I did not expect you so early—pray take a chair, Mr. Dacre. Upon my word," continued he, looking at the clock, "I hardly expected a gentleman from the West End would have been so true to his time."

Dacre hoped he was not too early.

"Not at all, my dear sir! not at all—we men of business, you know, prize punctuality, but we don't often meet with it now-a-days. Very dirty walking to-day?"

Dacre said it was.

"Then, with your leave, Mr. Dacre, I will ring the bell, to say I'll take an airing this afternoon.—Mrs. Shepherd is not at home, and so," said he, half laughing, "I am obliged to take care of myself to-day."

Dacre felt glad she was out, though he knew that Mr. Wakefield's decision must have been made before he desired to speak to him.

"Well Mr. Dacre, I have taken the liberty of asking you to call upon me this morning, in order that we might have a little talk upon the subject of Mr. Molesworth's letters."

Dacre was all attention.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Wakefield, pettishly, as he got up hastily from his chair, "what a draught of air comes in at that door! I am sure it must be open, or else the outward door is not shut."

Dacre rose, but before he could offer to find out the cause of the draught, Mr. Wakefield had shuffled half way across the room.

"What a strange thing it is," continued he, as he slowly returned from closing the outward door, "that the servants always will leave open whatever ought to be shut—it is

very provoking that now-a-days they won't do what they are told ;" muttered he to himself.

Dacre thought the interruption still more provoking, but he knew he must be patient.

" Well, Mr. Dacre," said he, after a slight pause, " as I was saying just now, I wish to talk to you about this marriage between a son of Mr. Molesworth's, and my niece, Mary Bingley. I think I understood from what you said, as well as from Mr. Molesworth's letter, that, unless I came forward in the matter, the young people would be obliged to give up their engagement."

Dacre told him it was so, and how much their happiness depended on its fulfilment.

" Poor things !" said Mr. Wakefield, " it is a sad pity when young people let themselves grow fond of one another, before they know what they shall have to live upon."

Dacre agreed—but just hinted it was not always possible to peep into the settlements before the attachment was formed.

" It is very unlucky," said Mr. Wakefield, " that there never was a time in which I was more hard pressed for money than the present ; my niece could not have chosen a worse moment for wishing to marry."

Dacre felt no doubt but that a refusal was at hand, and began to think how best he could combat it.

" I am sure I never thought I could have managed to do anything for her ; but," continued Mr. Wakefield, with a little chuckle, " ladies, you know, Mr. Dacre, are very clever at helping one another, and I consulted my good friend Mrs. Shepherd upon the matter. She understands my affairs well ; and you will be glad to hear she has pointed out a way, that I had never thought of ; so I hope, my dear sir, the young folks will be happy."

Dacre could scarcely conceal his astonishment, whilst he expressed his extreme pleasure at this announcement. It was so contrary to his expectations—so very delightful—yet so very strange, that Mrs. Shepherd should actually have been the means of forwarding that, which he had felt certain she would, if possible, prevent.

" Ah ! Mr. Dacre, I knew you were so much interested about your friend, that I was sure you would be glad to



hear of the arrangements I can make in favour of my niece. Mrs. Shepherd says I must write to Mr. Molesworth a real business letter about it all to-morrow, but we agreed that it would only be fair that you should be told of it first."

Dacre thanked him for his consideration towards himself, and said something of the obligation that Miss Bingley and his friend would feel for Mrs. Shepherd's kind sympathy.

"She is, indeed, my dear sir, a real treasure. There are not many such in the world. To me she is quite invaluable; for without her care and kindness, mine would be a sad cheerless life, Mr. Dacre." The old man's voice rather trembled as he spoke: he looked for a moment at the portrait of the boy that hung in the room; and a tear glistened in his eye. "We all have our troubles, you know, Mr. Dacre," continued he; "and I have had mine; and poor Mrs. Shepherd has had hers. Poor thing! hers is a sad story; and nobody knows her worth who does not know all she has gone through."

Dacre most anxiously desired to hear the history of Mrs. Shepherd; for the thoughts of the picture were vivid in his mind, and he could not help expecting that her story might possibly bring some mention of his father—some explanation of the likeness in the miniature.

"Mrs. Shepherd, then, I presume, sir, is an old friend of yours?" said he, inquiringly, in hopes of eliciting some further details.

"She is, indeed," replied Mr. Wakefield; "and a tried and faithful friend.—*He* first brought her to this house," said he, pointing to the picture of the child; "and she actually came as his nurse." Dacre looked surprised. "You may well look surprised," continued he; "but so it was. The birth of that little boy made me a widower. Mrs. Shepherd's husband was in distressed circumstances, and—would you believe it—she forgot her rank in society, and, for his sake, she actually determined to go out to service."

Dacre said it was, indeed, a most praiseworthy sacrifice; and Mr. Wakefield went on, as soon as a fit of coughing would allow him.

"I did not know who she was for a long while; but, as

I could not bear to part with her, after all her kindness to my poor child, I persuaded her to be my housekeeper."

Dacre observed that it must have been very distressing to Mr. Shepherd's feelings that his wife should, for his sake, make any such sacrifice.

"Lord bless you, my good sir! he never knew anything about it. It would have broken his heart to have heard it. But his name was not Shepherd: that was her maiden name: his name was Harrison."

"Mr. Harrison was abroad, then, I suppose, sir?" rejoined Dacre.

"You shall hear, Mr. Dacre,—you shall hear. Mrs. Shepherd, as I told you before, was my housekeeper; and I never even knew that she was married till I saw her in weeds, and then she told me her story. Poor soul!—she had kept all her sorrow to herself. Her husband, Lieutenant Harrison, was a man of very respectable family: his circumstances were sadly embarrassed; but he was proud, and would never have borne the humiliation of his wife foregoing her proper station in life; so, whilst he was away on foreign service, she resumed her maiden name, and supported herself by her own exertions. There are not many women, Mr. Dacre, that would, I think, have had the spirit to behave like that," said Mr. Wakefield, with a tone of triumph.

Dacre praised Mrs. Shepherd's praiseworthy energy, and hoped that Lieutenant Harrison had been fully sensible of the merits of his wife.

"Yes; she says he was very fond of her. I dare say they had been very happy together, poor things! for she can't bear the mention of his name, now; it always upsets her for the day."

Dacre asked if her husband had been killed in action.

"I think not," replied Mr. Wakefield; "at least I know she said his death was not gazetted,—he was only returned as missing. I am pretty sure," said he, rubbing his forehead, and trying to recollect; "I am pretty sure she told me he was taken prisoner, and died in the enemy's prison. It is many years ago, now,—my memory is not so good as it was, so that I can't be quite so certain how he died; and I never like to let her talk about it—it makes her so nervous"

Dacre said it must certainly be a most painful subject.

"Yes, Mr. Dacre, it is, indeed; and it distresses her, she says, to worry me with her misfortunes; and so, till the other day, we have not mentioned the subject for a long while. But, poor soul! she wished me to tell you all about her, for fear you should think her strange or rude."

"Me, sir!" said Dacre, in undisguised astonishment.

"Yes—about the picture, you know."

Dacre leant forward with an expression of interest in his countenance that could not have escaped the observation of any one whose perceptions were less deadened than Mr. Wakefield's. "Dear me," continued he, "how stupid I am! I forgot I had not told you about that miniature. Don't you remember, Mr. Dacre, that you asked me about a little miniature the other day? Oh dear, I was so distressed for fear she should hear you for—only think! that was the portrait of poor Mr. Harrison! Unluckily, she did hear your question, but she bore it pretty well."

Dacre expressed his regret that he should so unintentionally have distressed her.

"She knew it was accidental, but she was so afraid you should have thought her wanting in politeness, that she begged I would explain it all to you. I have advised her to lock it up in future, for you know it is very natural people should ask questions, and it is not always she can control her feelings."

Dacre again apologized for his indiscreet question, adding, by way of exculpation, that an extraordinary resemblance to a portrait of his father had made him desirous of knowing whose likeness it was.

"Really!" exclaimed Mr. Wakefield, in a tone that approached to childish surprise, "really! you don't say so! well, that is very curious. I am sure it made it very natural you should wish to ask about it. I don't think the portrait is like you;" said he, looking up at Dacre, "and Mrs. Shepherd did not say she thought you like poor Mr. Harrison; but then you know, my dear sir, people are as often like their mothers as their fathers—perhaps you are like your mother."

Dacre merely said, in reply, that it was very possible;

and then, thinking that the conversation was taking a turn by no means agreeable to his feelings, he rose to depart—thanked Mr. Wakefield for his kindness, in having thus allowed him to be the messenger of joyful tidings to his friend—spoke with confidence of the gratitude that both Harry Molesworth and Miss Bingley would feel towards him for his liberality—heard again that it was all Mrs. Shepherd's doing, and then took his leave.

Mr. Wakefield's brief sketch of the life and adventures of Mrs. Shepherd called up a strange succession of thoughts in Dacre's mind. The mystery was cleared away. The wished-for *éclaircissement* had taken place; and Dacre had been relieved, and disappointed, and ill satisfied at the result—relieved, that none of his evil anticipations had been realized, disappointed at the conversion of an object of interest into one of indifference, and ill satisfied with a solution of his doubts, which it was difficult to believe, and yet impossible to disprove. The strong indisputable fact of the resemblance to the portrait of his father had in no way been accounted for, and the less he felt alarmed at identifying the likeness, the more striking and indubitable did it seem. Mr. Wakefield had spoken of Mr. Harrison as a lieutenant. Dacre remembered having observed that the uniform in the picture was that of a captain; but then Mr. Wakefield's memory was so obviously on the wane, that it was scarcely possible to deduce any positive inference from his having so called him.

As Dacre drew nearer to home, the pleasing anticipation of the happiness of his friend took place of every other thought; nor did the reality disappoint his expectations. Harry was all joy and gratitude—grateful to Dacre for his trouble, and grateful to Mr. Wakefield for his kindness to Mary Bingley—convinced that Mrs. Shepherd must be an angel instead of an officer's widow in disguise—surprised that Dacre could ever have doubted her worth—heard with pity the tale of her woes, and was almost impatient with Dacre for wasting another thought on the miniature, now that the veracity of Mrs. Shepherd, and the good sense of Mr. Wakefield, were so satisfactorily established by their liberal conduct.

Dacre was anxious that the arrival of Mr. Wakefield's letter to Mr. Molesworth should precede the return of

Harry to Thornbury Park. Perhaps, in the innermost recesses of his heart, there still lurked a faint suspicion that Mr. Wakefield might not be permitted to fulfil his kind intentions. If so, he would not listen to, and still less give utterance to such a gloomy thought—but he knew that Mr. Molesworth would object to his son seeing Mary, till he had heard from Mr. Wakefield what he meant to do for his niece, and he also knew that Harry would be impatient of any such delay. Under these circumstances, therefore, though he made no attempt to stop the current of gladness that flowed through Harry's every thought and word, yet he was well pleased to have succeeded in persuading him to postpone his departure for one whole day.

Mr. Wakefield was true to his word; and Harry Molesworth arrived at Thornbury Park in time to be despatched himself to Mary Bingley, as the messenger of the joyful intelligence contained in her uncle's epistle.

Poor Mary! from the time Mr. Molesworth had deemed it expedient she should pay her visit to Mrs. Plumer, she had endured a severe penance from the never-ceasing loquacity of the good old lady. Mrs. Plumer was one of those who have the power to interrupt without diverting the thoughts of others; and though Mary was always civil and amiable, she found it rather difficult, when Mrs. Plumer speculated on who was knocking at the attorney's door, and whose carriage could be so constantly stopping at old Mrs. Pye's, and who was walking with young Mrs. Bunn, not to answer with the names of Mr. Wakefield and Harry Molesworth. Moreover, Mrs. Plumer was aware of the state of affairs between Mary and young Molesworth; and whenever, therefore, her attention was not attracted by the passing objects of the country town in which she lived, she repeated to Mary over and over again, all that she had perceived, and surmised, and suspected of the flirtation, before any body else had noticed it, and before either Harry or herself had a notion of it themselves; and then she wisely expected and predicted all things most contrary to each other, to secure to herself the certainty of having guessed beforehand, whatever came to pass.

Poor Mary! it had been a wearisome day. Mrs. Plumer had told "o'er the weary tale" many a time; and she had listened with patience, if not attention, to all that was not worth hearing, and she was wondering when her hostess

would finish winding the interminable skein of worsted she had sentenced her to hold, and hoping that dressing time would soon come, when a ring at the bell announced a visitor. Before Mrs. Plumer had time to mention above four people whom it might possibly be, Harry Molesworth was in the room. The letter in his hand, and the smile on his face, told Mary at once that their happiness was secured; and tears of joy glistened in her eyes, as she returned the warm pressure of her lover's hand.

Dacre had been much too unselfish, not heartily to sympathize in the feelings of his friend. He had shared his anxiety—he had exulted in his success—he had rejoiced in his happiness; and it was not till after they had parted at the place from whence Harry was to start, that he felt the contrast of their situations fall like a blight upon his spirits. Harry was beloved by the object of his affections, and he knew that he was so. He enjoyed the blessings of parental love; he stood foremost in the affection of a brother; he had a home—not a home in name only, but a home in feeling—a home in the house of his youth.

A home! what a host of pleasing thoughts are comprised in that single blessed sound! Perhaps the universal tendency to magnify the troubles of the present, and the enjoyments of the past, contributes not a little to enhance the value of early recollections—and whilst the chain of memory that hangs to that one loved word, recalls, at each link, the joys and pleasures of our budding life, time has softened or effaced the traces of sorrow that had too often accompanied their existence. The childish frolic is remembered, and the reproof forgotten. The fruits of education are gathered, but the toil of cultivation is not remembered. The mother's care in sickness has been treasured in the mind, though the pain has long ceased. Then the father's indulgence, the attachment of dependents, and that partnership in mischief and disgrace, in pleasure, in industry and reward, that binds brothers and sisters together by a bond which maturity strengthens, but cannot create—all combine to associate the feelings of affection and gratitude, with the habitation of our childhood, and to enshrine in our hearts the sacred love of home.

It was true that many of these blessings had been wanting to Dacre in his early life. He had been an only child, and an orphan: but he had loved his home; and the sound

of that word alone recalled the vision of a period untainted by mortification, whilst memory quickly summoned the images of all who were associated with that happy time, and of all that had ministered to the amusement of his childhood. The fondness, the caresses, the instructions of his uncle; and the care and solicitude of his father's old nurse—the long corridors and mysterious dark passages, where he had played “hide-and-seek,” half fearful, half daring, with the chance playmates who came to the house—the old keeper to whom he was entrusted to use his first gun—the pride of the groom who taught him to ride—the first pony—the pet dog—the pond on which his mimic boat was borne triumphantly by the zephyrs of a summer's day—the lake on which he had learnt to row—the pictures he had misused for targets to his arrows—the favourite grotto, where he studied the adventures of Crusoe till he pined for the comforts of a desert isle—the garden—the pleasure-ground—the woods—the avenues—the park—the everything at Hexham was endeared to his heart, by the long treasured associations to which they were linked; and yet time and circumstances had deprived him already of the sight of all to which these feelings belonged. Harry Molesworth had been often invited to be the play-fellow of his earliest childhood; and it seemed that he alone remained, of those, to whom Dacre could say, “*we*,” when he talked of those times.

But Hexham was not Harry's home; and Dacre knew that he had stronger and dearer ties elsewhere. Their mutual friendship had been undoubtedly cemented by this meeting in London; but when they parted that morning, he had marked the look of happiness that lighted up young Molesworth's face, as he reckoned up the few short hours that would restore him to his home: and now that all excitement had subsided, all incentive to exertion was over, Dacre felt that he was alone in the world.

Madame de Staël has truly said—

“Lorsque sur cette terre on se sent délaissé,  
“Qu'on n'est d'aucun mortel la première pensée,

“On se désintéresse à la fin de soi-même,  
“On cesse de s'aimer, si personne ne nous aime.”

Dacre felt the bitter consciousness of this truth. He had fortune—he had advantages that many would sigh for, but he was lonely. He felt that to one only could he look for the creation of a home and its joys, and yet he dared not indulge himself in the contemplation of a picture, which he could scarcely hope to realize.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

Oh! thou resort and mart of all the world,  
Chequer'd with all complexions of mankind,  
And spotted with all crimes; in whom I see  
Much that I love, and more that I admire,  
And all that I abhor.

COWPER.

DACRE had determined to remain in London for a few days after Harry's departure, lest the letter from Mr. Wakefield should call for further interference, in which he might be useful. He was not inclined for society, and he therefore abstained from all visits, and avoided such places as he knew to be the idle haunts of men of his acquaintance.

Nothing is easier than for a man of fashion in London to remain *incog.* by the mere study of the sights and sounds of different hours. First comes the loud shrill call of "*Sweep!*"—and badly indeed must the idle man in London sleep, who hears that call. But when the loud sonorous cries of fish and vegetables resound with unbroken noise through the street—when at each door may be seen a dirty maid in paper curls, sweeping from the hall, or twirling a mop, or washing the steps—when the emissaries of the dealers in fish and fowl, the butcher, the baker, the grocer, the cheesemonger, and the milkman, maintain their undisturbed possession of the pavement as they whistle loudly along,—when, in short, London reveals in the streets, the arcana of domestic economy, and seems turned, for the time, into the huge offices of its own vast self,—then, perhaps, may a man like Francis Dacre, engaged neither in the business or dissipation of the Metropolis, be expected to be almost ready for breakfast.



Breakfast over—the newspaper half read, and lo! another change of scene and sound from without. The little milliner trips quickly along with her oil-skin covered basket—troops of children with fat nurses, and young nursery maids, flock along the pavement—the hand-organs grind the popular airs of the last season, whilst the clarinet and bag-pipes screech and whine out those of the preceding century. The rumble and gingle of carts becomes frequent, whilst the rapid approach and departure of the quick driven chariot bespeaks the physician or the man of business on the move.

This, then, is the moment for the *incognito* to sally forth—now may he walk through the squares, and places, and streets, and parks, secure of meeting none of those to whom London owes its West-end reputation for wealth, luxury, beauty, elegance, and idleness. But let him not tarry till too near the hour of luncheon—for then will be seen in motion, figures of well-dressed men, with an air “as if it was somebody one knows,”—and then, perhaps, a cab, drawn by a gigantic horse, of violent action, making scarcely any way, with the child just fresh from an infant school standing behind—two examples in life of the *parvum in multo* and the *multum in parvo*—and the roll of carriages is more constant—and Mr. Maitland is sure to be abroad—for he never lunches at home.

Our recluse has escaped from the danger of seeing his numerous friends and acquaintance—and now in vain he tries to read—in vain he tries to think.—All London is in motion; and the din and tumult of the Metropolis echoes through his head, and the sounds of carts and omnibuses, coaches, cabs, carriages, horses, and men, are all blended together in one overpowering noise—whilst the bands of musicians—the trumpet of punch—the applause of the Fantoccini—the barking of coach-dogs—the musical monkeys—the hurdy-gurdies of white mice—the nasal twang of a French woman’s voice—and the guttural grunt of the “Buy a broom” girls, lend their never-failing aid to disturb the man who would be quiet.

But patience! All will again be hushed.—The post bell has driven you half mad for half an hour; but then, either in spring, or in summer, the worst of the bustle is over—troops of gay parties on horseback have turned homewards—ladies without number are to be seen dismounting at their doors. Exhibitions are all closed—and their human adver-

tisers are seen marching in single file from their posts with the advertisements on their backs again. The noise of wheels subside, and is heard only at intervals. Every body is now busied in preparation for dinner, or enjoying the fruits of the morning's activity, and all is more quiet than since the hour when poor little "Sweep" first gave note in the morning that occupation was resumed; till the rumble of the diners-out gives once more an occasional disturbance to the long-wished-for stillness.

For some few days Dacre availed himself of the warning sounds and signs of the Metropolis, and successfully avoided all whom he knew—but, Cinderella-like, he forgot the hour, and a rencontre with Mr. Maitland was the punishment. "Hallo! Dacre! you in town still!" and "What keeps you here, when the shooting season is not over?" and "Seen Lady Anne this morning?" were questions that instantly greeted his ear. To be sure Mr. Maitland gained little from the answers; but then he had something to mention to those on whom he called, and he was not without hope of eliciting something from them, as to the cause of Dacre being in town, and yet going nowhere.

The following day, as Dacre returned from a stroll, he found on his table a note, and a card. The invitations were both for the same day—a kind note from Lady Anne insisting on his joining her party at the play, and a formal request of the honour of his company to dinner from the Duke and Duchess of Bolton. He felt rather inclined to decline both, but he had no good reason for so doing, and then he doubted which he should accept. Lady Anne's note was very friendly: he was sure of being well received by her. The Duchess's invitation was probably an act of civility of the Duke's; for he was confident she positively disliked him. Both had been in company with Lady Emily, since he had seen her, and the Duchess was her first cousin; but then, as Crofton had said she was determined on promoting a marriage with Sir Edward Bradford, he had no hopes of hearing anything of Lady Emily from her, and should probably be doomed to hear the praises of Sir Edward, if not to meet him.—No! he would not dine at Bolton House. He was more likely to learn from Lady Anne whatever he wished to know—and if not that, he was at least certain of hearing nothing that was disagreeable to his feelings from her. Accordingly, a refusal and an

acceptance were severally written and despatched ; and Dacre found himself, at the appointed time, in Lady Anne Preston's box at the play.

When he entered, Lady Anne was listening with the greatest attention to some information Mr. Preston was generously bestowing on her. They were, in fact, *tete-à-tete* ; and, whenever there was nobody else to be captivated, Lady Anne always filled up the time by employing her powers of fascination upon her own husband. Mr. Preston had been describing, with green-room-like technicality, some trifling stage directions, and had arrived at criticising some anachronisms in the dresses of the actors, when Dacre arrived. Lady Anne shook him cordially by the hand, but continued to enter with apparent interest into all that Mr. Preston had to say. To have cut short his discourse too abruptly, would have been injudicious. Lady Anne knew well that such a change would have destroyed the effect of her previous attention. She only ceased to give him the encouragement of questions that so flatteringly implied his power to give her information, and then it died a natural death, and she could safely turn to Dacre.

Mr. Maitland next arrived in the box : and to show how well he knew what was "the right thing" to do, he scarcely spoke to either Dacre or Lady Anne, but instantly applied himself to engaging Mr. Preston in conversation. Something amusing passed on the stage. Dacre laughed, and so did Lady Anne.

"Do you know," said she, lowering her voice as she spoke—"do you know I invited you to-night for the express pleasure of having somebody who would enter into my own feelings during the play?—so remember," added she, playfully, "that I expect you, all this evening, to laugh when I laugh, and cry when I cry."—Dacre promised to do his best, and Lady Anne kept up a well-managed little fire of *persiflage* and sentiment, that could not fail to make Dacre feel how agreeable she could be.

In time they recurred to the subject of Hatton, and Lady Anne gave an amusing account of Mr. Crofton's short visit to the Whitbys—his shivering horror of the wholesome habits of English people, in an English winter—his telling Lord Whitby, in the falseness of his heart, that he meant to be a good country gentleman, and the *threatened* punishment of his hypocrisy, by a view in de-

tail of what Lord Whitby designated as “*my wild fowl, my keepers, my styes, my stalls, my kennel, and my justice-room,*”—and a lecture from Lady Whitby as to what schools, hospitals, &c. it would be right, and popular for him to become a subscriber—his hopeless efforts to disguise how bored he was, and the evident difficulty under which he laboured to adapt his conversation to the simple tastes and understandings of what he called *l'aimable jeunesse*, and his vain attempts to stop Lady Whitby from telling him of all Lady Maria's proficiencies, and Mrs. Ashby's ill-concealed consciousness that he was the unmarried possessor of Hexham House. Perhaps Lady Anne knew well, beforehand, that Dacre was likely to be no unwilling listener to such an account of Mr. Crofton; and certainly he gave her no reason to change her mind; for, as she was very entertaining, and there was nothing that Dacre had either seen or heard of Crofton which gave him a favourable impression of his character, he enjoyed all she had to tell.

Then came the Kendals on the *tapis*: that was just what Dacre wished. Lady Anne had not much liked either Lord or Lady Kendal. She pronounced the latter to have very little in her; and she thought Lord Kendal was singularly proud and illiberal for so clever a man.

Dacre endeavoured to ascertain on what grounds she had formed that opinion; but Lady Anne avoided giving any direct answer. She only looked as if she could have justified her impression, but forbore to do so; and it instantly occurred to Dacre, that it was probably founded on some remark or opinions of Lord Kendal's respecting himself, and he said no more.

Lady Anne, however, had more to say of that family. She had been so delighted with Lady Emily,—she was so accomplished—so very lovely—so very brilliant—quite the sort of beauty that lights up a room.—“You can't think,” added she, “how gay and agreeable she was after you were gone! in fact, *entre nous*, if it had not been for her loveliness, and her singing, and acting, we should have found it very dull.”

“What acting?” said Dacre; who instantly figured to himself the frightful picture of Sir Edward Bradford and Lady Emily, performing as hero and heroine of the piece.

“Oh! the acting was nothing worth mentioning,” re-

plied Lady Anne ; “ merely some charades to please the children : but Lady Emily was very amusing ; though, to be sure, it was a little coquettish of her to select an old woman’s part ; for she made herself look just old enough to show how little age could impair her beauty.”

“ Her looking so well might be more her misfortune than her fault,” said Dacre, smiling, as he felt relieved at finding it was no worse. “ I don’t believe she has the reputation of a coquette.”

“ No !” rejoined Lady Anne ; “ I am surprised to hear people say so ; for I am sure, in general, she seems positively to despise the homage of her admirers. Perhaps one should hardly like to see one’s sister, or one’s daughter, quite so insensible ; and yet I don’t know,—there is something one cannot help respecting in such perfect self-government. I dare say she will make a much better marriage than if she were more sensitive ; and I rather think Lord Kendal will expect his son-in-law to have as many quarterings as an Austrian noble.”

Dacre smiled ; not with his feelings, but with his mouth. Nothing sprang readily to his lips, that could be said in answer to these observations ; and so he devoted himself to listening to what was passing on the stage.

In a short time the door of the box again opened, and Sir Edward Bradford made his appearance. Sir Edward was in very good spirits, and, as usual, in very good humour, and decidedly agreeable : but Dacre could hardly help fancying, at times, that his manner was meant to be offensively triumphant ; and he began to regret that he had come to the play.

“ Bradford, have you seen anything of the Boltons since they arrived ?” asked Mr. Maitland, who wanted to discover whether Crofton was right in saying that the duchess meant to make the marriage between him and Lady Emily.

“ I met the duchess yesterday. I had forgotten that they were to be in town so soon,” replied Sir Edward, carelessly.

“ I fancied that you were to have dined there to-day,” continued Mr. Maitland. “ They have a great dinner, I know.”

“ Very likely,” said Sir Edward, laughingly ; “ but, my dear fellow ! you, who know everything about every body,

ought to be aware that they have always omitted even the preliminary step to my dining with them."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Maitland; "you don't really mean that you never were invited to dinner there?"

Sir Edward was not a little amused at Mr. Maitland's gravity upon the subject. "It is certainly very humiliating," he replied, "to make such a confession; but, between friends, such is the fact."

"Upon my word it is too bad!" muttered Mr. Maitland, shaking his head, and looking rather important. "This is just the sort of thing that spoils the society at Bolton House. They never do ask the right people; and so I have told the Duke a hundred times. I even took the trouble of writing him out a list, once, of the right people to have at dinner; and your name was down of course. It is a great pity that a man in his situation should not attend more to those sort of things," continued he, in something of a soliloquizing tone.

Dacre had heard enough now to make him thoroughly repent not having dined at Bolton House instead of coming to the play; and whether this feeling gave him an intense interest in the performance, or made him feel that even Lady Anne's conversation had grown quite flat, it matters not to inquire; but certain it was that, for the rest of the evening, he looked towards the stage; he scarcely spoke; and, before he left the theatre, had resolved to call upon the duchess of Bolton the following day.

The following morning he fulfilled his intention, and called at the hour when he thought the duchess was most likely to be at home; but of course she was out, as who is not that ought to be at home? He let two days elapse, and then called again. They had left town that morning to return to their place in the country. Disappointments like these, though apparently trifling, are real trials to those who, like Dacre, measure their value rather by their possible than their positive consequences; and, like all disappointed men, he began to talk of going abroad. "Anything," thought he, "will be preferable to the wretched slavery in which I am kept by my present state of feelings. Long absence may help to bring me to a better frame of mind;" and he reached a map to trace out a pilgrimage to the East. "That must be my route," said he to himself, as he completed with his finger the tour he would make;

“and long before I have accomplished this journey, she will be another’s. If she is but happy, I ought to be reconciled to my fate ; and should I live to return, ambition shall be my mistress. I will not for ever lead this useless life. Every man has duties to perform ; and I will try and fancy, like other patriots, that I am serving my country.”

Perhaps these resolves succeeded, at least for the moment, in tranquillizing his irritable feelings ; for, strange to say, such is often the effect of imposing on ourselves the task we should have regarded as an aggravation of evil, had it sprung from another.

Dacre had long promised a friend in the neighbourhood of London to pay him a visit : and, thinking the present a good opportunity for fulfilling his promise, a day was again fixed for his leaving town. It occurred to him that it would be but a proper attention on his part once more to pay his respects to Mr. Wakefield. Mr. Wakefield had treated his friend Harry with so much kindness, and himself with so much civility, that it was natural Dacre should wish to show him attention in return ; and, perhaps he scarcely acknowledged to himself that he was actuated by any other motive in calling upon him. But such was not quite the case. In spite of Mr. Wakefield’s distinct assertion that the miniature was the portrait of Lieutenant Harrison—in spite of Harry’s strongly expressed conviction that Mr. Wakefield and Mrs. Shepherd must be incapable of deviating from the truth—in spite of his being himself convinced that he had misjudged Mrs. Shepherd during his first interview with Mr. Wakefield, and even in spite of the impossibility of accounting for her possession of a picture that was really the portrait of his father,—he could not help sometimes bestowing a thought on this strange resemblance ; and he felt a desire to have the chance of again seeing Mrs. Shepherd, or of affording Mr. Wakefield another opportunity of talking about her ; and accordingly he called.

On asking whether Mr. Wakefield was at home, the footboy looked wistfully at Dacre, and said in a half doubtful tone, “he believed not.”

Dacre asked if he was sure that Mr. Wakefield was out.

The footboy replied by asking, “if he would be so good as to tell his name.”

Dacre mentioned his name, giving him at the same time one of his printed cards.

"No, sir!" said the boy, in a more resolute tone. "know my master is not at home."

Dacre felt quite sure that Mr. Wakefield was at home: he even thought that he had heard his voice whilst speaking to the servant; but he had no right to turn a visit of civility into one of intrusion, and he therefore returned upon his steps, wondering to himself all the way, whether it were possible that his admission to the house had been forbidden, or whether it was only the ungainly manner of the little lackey that had given it that appearance.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Now through her woods *the country* calls,  
And echoes talk along her halls  
Of many a kitchen blazing hot,  
Of many a cellar cool as grot;  
Each with its rich abundance stored  
To crown the hospitable board:  
Their social ease and welcome warm  
How ill exchanged for state and form!  
Give freedom to each happy guest,  
Never tormented, never pressed,  
Except to do what suits him best.

LUTTRELL.

As the novelist can never be expected like the dramatist to submit to the thralldom of respecting the unities, we will transport the reader at once to the Duchess of Bolton's boudoir at Denham; and we will further use the author's privilege of reading over her shoulder the letter from Lady Emily Somers, which she is so attentively perusing. It was as follows:—

"My dear Caroline. Your kind invitation to pass a few days with you at Denham has luckily arrived at a mo-



ment when I can best be spared from home. I have got leave of absence for a whole week, on condition of returning quite early on Saturday. On that day, the repose and quiet that the pheasants and I have enjoyed of late will be invaded by a large party of sportsmen, with their wives and daughters. I rather hope that you and the duke will be alone, and indeed I inferred from your letter that you expected no company at present. People talk of the retirement of the country: I have wished of late that it was often-er to be found in the large country-house of an English country gentleman; for I never before felt so entirely unfitted for society. It is so irksome to appear gay when I am sad, and it is so difficult to be at ease with others when I am not at ease with myself. The mere fact of having a secret unimparted to my mother is a constant weight upon my mind. The consciousness that I have avowed to another, that which I have withheld from her gives me a guilty feeling in her presence; and yet the recollection that I am sparing her the infliction of pain and anxiety tells me it is a duty to let her remain in ignorance of what she cannot alleviate. I long to talk with you again on this subject, and then I shall know better what you would advise me to do before we go to London, where we shall probably again meet Mr. Dacre. I am glad you told me that Mr. Maitland had met him at the play with Lady Anne. I know you will scold me for saying so, but I cannot help regarding even this as a fresh proof of the preference he has for her society. Pray never conceal anything from me through fear of giving me pain; for perhaps the more strongly I can confirm the impression of his indifference towards me the better will it be for my ultimate welfare. But I will not inflict upon you any further reflections on this painful topic till we meet. Believe me always,

"My dear Caroline, your very affectionate cousin,

EMILY SOMERS.

"P. S.—Papa desires me to say, with his love, that you are not, on any account, to tempt me to stay one hour later than the time at which he has desired me to set out from Denham, as he really wishes me to return early on that day; and he has great misgivings of my power to resist your invitations."

The Duchess of Bolton had only just finished the perusal of this letter when the duke entered her room with others in his hand. He had received several answers to invitations he had written himself; and he now came to tell her whom they were to expect.

"By the by," said the Duke, half smiling, "here is an acceptance from a person whom you did not know that I had invited."

"Now I am sure," replied the duchess, good-humouredly, "you have been asking somebody that you know I can't bear, and then you will expect me to be civil to him."

"On the contrary," said the duke, "it is a person that you cannot fail to like, but then it is thanks to Maitland that he is coming!"

"That tiresome man!" exclaimed the duchess. "Why must he try to manage everything for every body?"

"Ah!" said the duke, laughing, "that's just what I expected; you are hard upon poor Maitland. His love of interference is really very often useful. He reminded me the other day that we had never invited Sir Edward Bradford; and thanks to his useful hint, I have asked him to come next week, when he would meet Dacre and some more of our Hatton party."

The duchess did not know that Dacre had been invited, and expressed surprise and pleasure at the announcement.

The duke had imagined she had been aware of his intention, and put into her hand Dacre's note. It said very little: it was only an acceptance of the invitation to Denham, and a request to be allowed to leave it uncertain for some few days whether he came on the Friday or the Saturday.

"I hope it will be Friday," said the duchess; and a little smile lurked at the corner of her mouth as she returned the note.

"You look as if you had some hidden meaning in that wish."

"Perhaps I have," rejoined the duchess, "but it is my turn now you know to be mysterious; and you have no chance of knowing at present, why I wish for his arrival on Friday, in preference to Saturday. Perhaps it is my

impatience to see him again—perhaps it is my anxiety to get his visit over.”

“Perhaps,” said the duke, “it is neither one nor the other; and I am beginning to grow curious.”

“Your patience must hold out a little longer,” replied the duchess. “Till his visit is over there is no hope for you.”

“Remember, then, Caroline, if I am patient till then, that I shall consider you bound to tell me the moment he is gone.”

“I will not promise,” said the duchess; “but your own discernment may perhaps assist you to discover my secret before then.”

It was always a difficult task to the duchess to conceal anything from her husband; but she had felt herself in duty bound to her cousin to keep for awhile, even from him, all knowledge of the conversation that had passed between them on the subject of Dacre. The duke had never detected the existence of any feeling of peculiar interest towards each other in the parties concerned; and the duchess had always therefore avoided putting her discretion to the proof, by abstaining from even such allusions as had been merely the result of her own observation. This announcement of Dacre’s possible arrival at a time which might afford so speedy an opportunity of his again meeting Emily, made her feel that her prudence was already rewarded. Knowing all she did, she could hardly have proposed such a measure. She would hardly have felt it right. She would have feared to increase the embarrassment that Emily must experience in meeting him again in her presence, for the first time, since she had made her confession of attachment. But now the very thing she had wished seemed likely to occur, without any compromise of scruples on her part; and she was sanguine in her expectations of good results from a meeting, however short, between Dacre and Emily.

Friday came. The duke had written, by the desire of the duchess, to beg that Mr. Dacre would come on whichever day best suited his convenience, at the same time expressing a hope that it might be the earliest; for she wisely thought that by releasing him from the obligation of fixing beforehand the time, it gave a better chance of his arriving ere Emily’s departure. The duchess had told Emily on

the Thursday that there was a possibility of Dacre's arrival on the following day; and from that moment all peace within had flown, though she assured the duchess of her conviction that he would not come till too late, with all the calmness she would fain have felt. Her heart was in one continued flutter of expectation, joy, hope, and fear.

Who does not know the painful excitement that attends the anticipation of any coming good or ill? Who has not experienced the feeling of abstraction—the icy hand—the flushed cheek—the ready start—and those fancied sounds that ever wait upon the ear of expectation? Who has not felt, as the moment of crisis approaches, that sickening sinking of the heart—its hurried beat—and the determined throb that vibrates strong through every pulse? and then the delusive reprieve of another delay—and again the same circle of feelings is run. To none who have ever loved, or hoped, or feared, can these sensations be unknown; and let not those who have dared avow the lengthened pains of anxious watching think lightly of the suspense endured by one, who, like Emily, was bound by every feeling of delicacy and prudence to conceal scrupulously from observation the varied emotions of her mind.

Emily talked and listened, and played and sang, and performed with exemplary patience the social tasks that were imposed upon her. But throughout all Thursday, it seemed as if every meal was delayed in coming, and prolonged in duration. The ride had been long—the walk fatiguing—every story was lengthy and pointless—and the evening endless. Three times had she put up her work, convinced that the hour of rest was at hand; and when at last she had hurried to her room, and hastily prepared for bed, time still seemed to drag its weary way with slow and laggard steps. She dreamt all night that she had slept too long; and starting up with this impression still on her mind, found, to her disappointment, that not quite an hour had elapsed since the same dream had awakened her before. The impression of haste was not gone the next morning, and she hurried her toilette, scarcely conscious that she did so, till the matter-of-fact assurance from her maid, "that there was no need of hurry, as her ladyship was earlier than usual," reminded her how little the dreaded, wished-for meeting would be accelerated by any

means in her power. With this reflection she endeavoured to tutor herself the rest of the morning, and she played with the children, and resolutely abstained from looking at her watch more than every half hour.

Luncheon over, the duchess proposed a walk. Lady Emily, Sir Edward Bradford, and some country neighbours were of the party; and as they sallied forth from the house, Emily could not refrain from just reckoning how many hours must elapse before the time when all doubt would be over of the possibility of Dacre's arrival on that day. The duchess was a florist, and so were two of the other ladies, and they lingered long in the flower-garden. There were new annuals to be discussed, and fine shrubs to be admired, and a great deal of astonishment to be expended on the half-hardy plants that had lived through the winter—though the winter was allowed to be still more wonderful, as there had been no frost.

Sir Edward disliked dawdling; and turning to Lady Emily remarked, that he wished the duchess would remember that guests were always tender plants, and would be chilled to death by standing out in such a cold damp day. Emily also longed to be in motion; for she, truly, felt the sooner the walk was begun, the sooner it would be over; and she playfully suggested to her cousin the inexpediency of their all catching cold in honour of the garden.

The duchess agreed, and the walk was begun. They had not, however, proceeded far, when the sound of approaching footsteps was heard. The duchess turned, and on seeing the servant emerge from the walk, gave the natural exclamation of, "How provoking! some tiresome morning visitor!" In another moment, the sound of the visitor's tread might be heard in echo to that of the footman.

Emily's heart beat quick—she dared not look up—her whole attention seemed absorbed in the pleasing occupation of spoiling the walk with the ferrule of a parasol; and she tried to compose herself. She told herself, "*It cannot* be he," and waited in breathless anxiety to hear the name she was so sure would not interest her. The sound that greeted her ear was an exclamation from the duchess. Dacre's name was pronounced. It was Dacre's voice that returned the salutation. The blood rushed to her face

and for an instant she felt she could not speak. But the effort must be made. None but Sir Edward had seen that blush. Her veil had fallen when she spoke to Dacre, and he knew not how the proffered hand trembled that was given with such seeming indifference.

The walk was continued; Dacre walked for awhile by the side of the duchess, and he was surprised at the kindness of her manner. He had not expected from her more than the bare civility of mere good breeding; and this unexpected cordiality gave him spirits to resist the depressing embarrassment occasioned by Lady Emily's presence.

In time the duchess contrived to approach Emily near enough to address her without much effort. "Emily!" said she, raising her voice a little. Lady Emily turned. The duchess made her a sign to come to her; and the sign was obeyed. "Emily, don't you remember, dear, that pretty, pleasing-looking girl, Miss Bingley, whom we admired at the Hatton ball?" said she, and she passed her arm through Lady Emily's as she spoke.

Lady Emily remembered Miss Bingley perfectly.

"Had you heard of her marriage with Captain Molesworth?" asked the duchess.

Lady Emily had not.

Dacre said it had only recently been declared, but that it was to take place immediately.

"Mr. Dacre tells me that Captain Molesworth is a charming person, and a great friend of his," observed the duchess.

"Oh yes!" replied Emily, turning towards him, "that I know he is, for I have so often heard you speak of Captain Molesworth, that I feel as if I were acquainted with him."

Emily blushed as she spoke.

Dacre observed that she did so, and there was something in this allusion to past times and conversations, which, common-place as it was, gave him pleasure.

The duchess continued the topic; for though it could not be supposed that the union of two people with whom she was unacquainted could be very interesting to her, she perceived that it was a subject on which Dacre conversed with ease and interest; and Lady Emily was soon lured into taking her part in the conversation. This was just

what the duchess had wished; and having thus assisted them to break down the barriers of embarrassment and pique, she disengaged herself from Lady Emily's arm, and, pointing out to her fellow-florists some new wonder in some new plant, left Dacre and Emily in the undisturbed enjoyment of a short *tete-a-tete*.

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## CHAPTER XX.

When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat;  
 Yet, fool'd with hope, men favour the deceit;  
 Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay—  
 To-morrow's falser than the former day;  
 Lies worse, and, while it says we shall be blest  
 With some new joys, cuts off what we possess.

DRYDEN.

It certainly is a most fortunate circumstance that watches and clocks are never in love; for without their interference poor time would, indeed, be most sadly belied. Every one takes his own fanciful view of the rate that he flies. Suspense makes a moment an age; and joy turns a day to an hour. Ennui lives a life in every week; and whilst idleness chides the slow flight of his foe, industry murmurs that he escapes her so swiftly. Still, old time goes on his own unwearied and unvaried pace, and various are the contrivances which, like faithful emissaries, mark that he does so, and love—even love—must submit to the cold decision of a well-regulated clock. Lovers may storm at delays that barely exist, and protest that hours gone by are yet to come; but the dull, insensible minister of time looks on unmoved by his passion: he strikes with stern justice—points at truth with his hand, and man must bow to the power of calculation he has lost. Had it not been for the assistance of the loud stable clock, the house-clocks, the dressing bell, and dinner bell, Emily would never have believed that Friday afternoon had com-

prised the same number of hours as that of Thursday. She had seen Dacre. She had followed her cousin's advice. She had talked to him—and she had talked to him without either that forced indifference, or that constraint by which she had sometimes felt herself obliged to disguise her real feelings at Hatton ; and though nothing worth recording had passed between them,—nothing even that she could repeat to the duchess,—yet to the quickened perceptions of love there was an expression in his countenance—a tone in his voice—an emphasis on his words—that whispered an assurance she had not yet been supplanted in his affections.

Dinner was announced ; and Dacre, punctiliously scrupulous of ever assuming the precedence his position forbade, fell back to the rear, as the company paired off in procession to dinner. Sir Edward Bradford had preceded him—a place was left vacant next to Lady Emily : Sir Edward must have seen that it was so—and Dacre felt sure he would occupy it—but he passed on to another—and Dacre forgave him half his sins, as he found himself in possession of the chair by her side. But Sir Edward's conduct perplexed him : it was unlike what he had seen before ; and as knowledge could supply no facts to account for this change, imagination soon furnished him with reasons that he would gladly not have thought of. The idea that this avoidance might be only the result of some explanation—some mutual agreement to disguise in company the feelings they had acknowledged to each other, crossed his mind ; and he hastily concluded he was indebted for her kindness of manner in their walk to her compassionate sympathy for the blow she was about to inflict. Feelings like these could not fail to damp the pleasure of his good fortune in sitting next to Lady Emily ; and for more than half the dinner he remained almost silent, and then when conversation did again begin, and, to others, might seem to flow smoothly and softly along, it was not quite what Lady Emily had expected ; and she re-entered the drawing-room with hopes less vivid, and spirits less excited, than she could have anticipated, when her heart beat so quick with delight, as she saw him take his place by her side.

She experienced something of that undefinable disappointment, which makes us dissatisfied with the progress of events, even though we had not positively expected any



other to happen. She wondered to herself in one minute, whether, after all, his affection was so necessary to her happiness ; and in the next, whether it were possible that she should ever, lastingly, engage the affections of one, whom she considered so superior to herself. Love teaches humility, and never do the attractions of others rise to our view in such formidable array ; and never does the consciousness of our own deficiencies tend to lower us so effectually as in the presence of the object of our devoted love.

The discussion that had arisen on political events in the dining-room had not terminated when the gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-room ; and as they ranged themselves in front of the fire, the duke addressed himself to Sir Edward, as if in continuance of some previous conversation. "Bradford," said he, "I suppose if this dissolution does take place, you will stand for some borough?"

Sir Edward replied in the negative.

"Nothing surprises me so much as your neither being nor intending to be in parliament," observed the duke ; "you always take so much interest in politics, you really ought to take some part in them. It disappoints the expectations of your friends to hear you talk so well in private, and yet never come forward in public life."

Sir Edward bowed and smiled in acknowledgment of the compliment ; and then declared, laughingly, that he abstained from appearing in any new character, out of consideration to his friends. "Besides," said he, "it is so much pleasanter to be told how well one could do, if one would, than to hear how much better one would do, if one could, that I cannot forego the enjoyment of friendly expectations I never should realize."

The duke laughed, but still urged the point of his playing some more useful part than that of mere connoisseur in the affairs of the nation ; and said something, half joking, half serious, in praise of well-directed ambition. But Sir Edward maintained, he should never be as powerful in action as in repose ; and that ambition could expect no more than to be crowned with the laurels she wrested from other men's brows. "Depend upon it," said he, "that the man who neither disappoints nor fulfils his promise is sure to be exalted above his fellows. His success is all in the imagination ; and *that* knows no bounds. We all know

the brilliant speech of Mr. A——, the wonderful reply of Mr. B——; but 'nobody knows,' says their envious listener, 'how much better Sir Edward and Sir Charles could have spoken than either, if they would but have given themselves the trouble.' "

Sir Edward was not to be convinced; and then followed some good-humoured attack and defence of his principles. There was, however, some truth in what Sir Edward had said of himself. He had, in fact, neither the inclination nor the power to lead other men's minds; and he was too just to gain strength from the spirit of party. His failings were indolence and vanity; and as in conversation he was sometimes brilliant, and always agreeable, he found society yielded the quickest return for the trouble expended; and he soon became indisposed to fit himself for a wider field of action, or to risk the reputation for talent he had so easily won.

Dacre had seated himself by Lady Emily; and he had watched her, with great anxiety, during this discussion with Sir Edward; but not even could his jealous eye detect, in her manner or countenance, any trace of that particular interest he supposed her to feel in the opinions of Sir Edward. "Perhaps," thought he, "this is only the calmness of unqualified assent to all he thinks and says."

Sir Edward had moved out of hearing distance; and Dacre, turning to Lady Emily, remarked, "that, of course, Sir Edward would have the support of the ladies in this avowed preference for social pleasure over public usefulness."

"I suppose," said she, smiling, "in common gratitude, we ought to uphold the good taste of preferring the world in which we move to any from which we are excluded; and we ought to like the fine speeches made to ourselves much better than those that are made in Parliament: and yet I don't believe we do. We are so idle ourselves, that I think we therefore admire industry the more in others."

"Had you represented this fact to Sir Edward," replied Dacre, "I suspect, it would have weighed more with him than anything that has been said to-night."

"Oh, no," replied Emily: "my powers of conversion are not very great; and Sir Edward assured me, the other

day, that, as the great drama of life would never go on if all were actors, and no audience, he served his country best by taking a front-place to look on at other men's works. In short," continued she, "you know, Sir Edward is very amusing, and makes one laugh, and every body must like him; for even if they think him wrong on this one point, there is nobody more generally right-minded than he is."

This was certainly praise of Sir Edward; but the praise was given in that open unhesitating manner to which love is a stranger; and the last fancy fabric which jealousy had built was at once swept away. The conversation was continued; and they talked of the advantages of occupation.

"I am persuaded," observed Dacre, "that the pursuit of some intellectual object is the only thing to preserve us from that hopeless union of age and folly at which the mere man of sports and pleasures is sure to arrive. We cannot help growing old," continued he; "but it saves us from feeling old: we may grow hackneyed in the idle ways of the world, but we are always young in knowledge."

Lady Emily warmly assented.

"I used sometimes," said he, "to wonder whether all amusing occupations, not vicious in themselves, might not be equally conducive to happiness; but it cannot be. Everything in life is progressive; nothing stands still. The mind that makes no progress is at war with nature; and ennui, the demon of idleness, is sure to inflict the punishment deserved."

"Yes," replied Lady Emily; "indeed, even in my short experience, I have often observed how heavily it afflicts all who are under its influence. Ennui seems a sort of spell, which casts a death-shade upon the very pleasures on which that idleness depends."

"And is it not extraordinary," said Dacre, "to see people voluntarily devote their time to pursuits which lead to no improvement—then persevere, in spite of age, and of every change that should make them conscious of their sameness and insipidity, and yet almost glory in declaring they afford them no amusement? yet such is the case of the devotee of fashion and of pleasure."

"You cannot think," replied Lady Emily, "how often it has struck me with surprise to see the struggle that some people make to prolong their youth, by a forced continuance of its follies; and really," added she, laughing, "when one sees a man who has been for years and years frequenting the same balls, paying the same compliments, making the same small talk, dancing with every new girl, and making friends with every new youth on purpose to keep himself young, it does make one think whether playing at the games of the nursery might not succeed in prolonging one's childhood."

Dacre smiled. "I hate to see that anomaly, an old butterfly," said he; "but they will always be found where society has been not the recreation but the occupation of life."

"I suspect from your way of speaking," said Lady Emily, "that you have been lately forming plans of useful industry?"

"Whether I shall ever succeed in being useful, is, I fear, very doubtful," replied Dacre, "but I have determined not to be idle. A lonely man, like me, cannot afford to despise himself; but" added he, in a tone which betrayed some emotion, "I must go abroad first. I am fit for nothing now. When I return, I must hope to be in a better frame of mind for business or application than at present."

Lady Emily's colour went and came, and for a minute she could not speak. That short sentence, "I must go abroad," had dealt a death-blow to her growing confidence in his attachment.

Dacre perceived her embarrassment, and as he falsely attributed it to the fear of an explanation she wished to avoid, his pride took alarm, and he made the effort to talk calmly of his intended journey, and said his absence would be long.

Lady Emily, scarcely knowing what to say, asked if he meant to go to Italy.

"No," replied Dacre, "I mean to avoid every place which I have already visited. The East is my object. There are no associations there with the living. One may learn much from the remains of past ages, or speculate on the future with advantage—but I must wish to forget my own generation."

Lady Emily's emotion almost choked her utterance, but

she felt that delicacy demanded self-control, and she asked in a firm, but subdued tone, if he meant to leave England soon.

"As soon as it is possible," he replied: "there is nothing so foolish," added he in a hurried tone, "as to delay, when one's mind is made up; it is mere weakness," murmured he to himself.

They both paused. Lady Emily bent over her work, as if she was going to resume the task of spoiling her embroidery.

This movement was observed by one of the ladies of the party, and in an audible voice, she asked the duchess if they might not hope for some music this evening. "I would not say a word," added she, "when Lady Emily was engaged in conversation, but I trust music may have the preference over work."

The duchess was not a little provoked at having the *tete-a-tete* between Dacre and Emily thus assailed; but to each of them it was at that moment a relief, for neither dared give expression to their thoughts, and Lady Emily rose with the most obliging alacrity to comply with the request.

Dacre soon followed to the piano-forte.

Lady Emily was at a loss to know on what song to fix; and, turning to Dacre, she asked him if he would name anything for her to sing. There was an expression of melancholy and tenderness in his countenance, as he replied, that nearly overcame poor Emily, and she almost repented her courage in having asked him the question.

Dacre turned over the leaves of her book, in quest of the song he had most wished to hear. It was that same English ballad she had sung at Hatton. That song, the words of which each had felt but too strongly applicable to the feelings they endured. But the pride that had then sustained Lady Emily through the task was now gone. She then thought herself the victim of a fickle and inconstant heart. She was now convinced that she was still the object of his affections. But, alas! that conviction had been accompanied by the intelligence of his approaching absence. She thought some unknown obstacle must exist to the avowal of his attachment, and that he therefore meant to seek in change of scene the oblivion of her, to whom he would not, or could not, unite his fate. "Will

you let me hear that, once more?" said Dacre, pointing to the song.

Emily knew she could not command herself sufficiently, and turning hastily over the leaf, she replied, "No, not that, pray find some other."

"You told me I might choose," said Dacre; "why will you not indulge me by singing that?"

Emily blushed deeply—she scarcely knew what she said. "I can never sing *that* when I am nervous—it is so high."

Dacre knew it was particularly low, and he saw that Lady Emily had some other reason for wishing not to sing it.

"Will you let me hear it to-morrow?" said he; "I should be sorry never to hear that again!"

"I go home to-morrow," replied Lady Emily, "but you shall hear it, if you please, in London."

"But we may not meet in London," said Dacre, looking at her earnestly.

"Oh yes," replied Emily, "we shall be in town very soon, and you will not be gone so very soon?" said she inquiringly, her face glowing with the agitation of this allusion to his departure.

"Not, if I may hear *that* first," rejoined Dacre.

Lady Emily begged him to join her in a little national air, to which she had, by accident, turned in her book, and luckily, for their musical reputation, there was nobody but the duchess in the room, who was sufficiently versed in the art, to discover how very indifferently it was performed.

It was getting late; the evening was over, and Emily found herself again in her room, detailing to the duchess all that had passed.

"My dear Emily," said the duchess, in answer to her confident assertion that nothing would prevent Dacre from going abroad, "if there really exists any mysterious reason that prevents Mr. Dacre from openly declaring his feelings towards you, it certainly is best he should at once absent himself—but I do not yet believe that such is the case. You will own, I have been right in my assurance that Lady Anne Preston had not superseded you in his affections; and I hope I may prove right again—though, of course, I cannot speak with equal confidence on that subject."

"No, no ; it would be too much happiness," replied Emily, as the tears stole down her cheeks, "if all were to go smoothly ; but, indeed, Caroline, I am happier now than when I was at Hatton. I hope it is not very selfish—not very wrong—but to feel sure of his attachment is a comfort, even though it may never lead to our union. I do not feel so humbled. I know I could bear anything for his sake, supported by his affection ; but to be treated with the indifference he had taught me not to feel, seemed so cruel."

The duchess kissed her, and hoped her trials might soon end. She then strongly recommended that Emily should now make Lady Kendal acquainted with every circumstance connected with her feelings towards Dacre. "You will soon meet Mr. Dacre in London, and it is not only right," said she, "that your mother should be acquainted with all that has passed on this subject ; but unless you remove her impression of his coldness and inconstancy, he will feel himself tacitly rejected by her manner towards him."

Emily had really suffered too much from the practice of any concealment from her mother, not to readily promise to confess all to her, so soon as she returned home.

Breakfast was scarcely concluded the following morning, ere the carriage was announced. Lady Emily had come down prepared for her departure, and she now only waited to take leave of the party, till the duchess had finished a note to Lady Kendal, of which she was to be the bearer.

"Emily," said the duchess, looking up from her writing, "are you sure you have collected all your property ? Have you got your work box and your music book ?"

"No :—" the music book had been forgotten ; and Dacre's offer to search for it, and give it to the servant was accepted. As he returned to the room, Emily was standing in the window, watching the clouds which threatened her with rain.

"I have given the music," said he, approaching her ; "but if the book could have found a voice, I should have been tempted to keep it. I should then, you know," continued he, speaking still lower, "have heard the song you would not sing last night."

"You forget," replied Lady Emily, with a faint attempt

to smile, "that I have promised you shall hear it when next we meet."

"No," replied Dacre: "I have not forgotten—you must know that I was not likely to forget *that*; but you did not tell me where I might be allowed to have the opportunity of so doing."

"That must rest with you," rejoined Emily: "wherever you please—at home, or at Bolton House; but here comes the servant," said she, "to announce the carriage again, and I must not delay."

"You will not forget your promise," said he, in a tone that implied a far deeper interest than any that a mere song could have produced.

"Why should you suspect it?" replied Lady Emily, with a look which showed that she attached a more than common meaning to her words.

"I have always," said he, "too much reason to expect what I dread; and I feared London might change your intentions."

"I am never capricious," rejoined Lady Emily, and she put out her hand to bid him good-by. He pressed it warmly; and though her countenance bore the evidence of confusion, and even agitation, there was no trace of displeasure to be seen in her face, as she turned from the window to depart. She embraced her cousin, let her veil fall over her face, as she made her adieu to the rest of the party, and then accepting the duke's arm, who led her to the door, she threw herself back in the corner of the carriage, and from Denham to her home, it may be fairly supposed, that not even Dacre himself could have murmured at the intrusion of a single thought in her mind unconnected with himself.



## CHAPTER XXI.

But happy they, the happiest of their kind,  
 Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate  
 Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend.  
 'Tis not the coarser tie of human laws,  
 Unnatural oft, and foreign to the mind,  
 That binds their peace; but harmony itself,  
 Attuning all their feelings into love.

THOMSON.

DACRE returned to London—and though he hardly yet dared allow himself to be sanguine, yet still, during this last meeting with Emily, he had gathered hope—a hope dearer to his heart than all but its realization. And to what did this hope owe its birth? To a slight emphasis on a single letter. She had said, “*I am never capricious.*” Did she mean, then, to accuse him of caprice? Was it possible she could have so greatly misconstrued his feelings towards her? Could she have so mistaken the motives which had withheld him from giving utterance to the sentiments, of which he knew every look and action must have borne testimony? Perhaps it was so: and he fondly clung to this explanation of her coldness—fondly hoped that on him lay the blame of all the misery he had endured.

On his arrival in London, he there found awaiting his return a summons to Thornbury Park. The day was fixed for the marriage of Harry Molesworth and Mary Bingley, and it was deemed by all parties indispensable that he should be present at the ceremony. It was fortunate for Dacre that his visit to Denham had somewhat fortified his mind for the contemplation of such a scene, as he was now called upon to witness. He could better enjoy the sight of the happiness he had so earnestly desired for his friend, when the contrast with his own blank prospects was less hopelessly marked.

Marriage is to a woman at once the happiest and the saddest event of her life : it is the promise of future bliss raised on the death of all present enjoyment. She quits her home—her parents—her companions—her occupations—her amusements—everything on which she has hitherto depended for comfort—for affection—for kindness—for pleasure. The parents by whose advice she has been guided—the sister to whom she has dared impart the every embryo thought and feeling—the brother who has played with her, by turns the counsellor and the counselled—and the younger children, to whom she has hitherto been the mother and the playmate—all are to be forsaken at one fell stroke : every former tie is loosened—the spring of every hope and action is to be changed ; and yet she flies with joy into the untrodden path before her : buoyed up by the confidence of requited love, she bids a fond and grateful adieu to the life that is past, and turns with excited hopes and joyous anticipation of the happiness to come. Then wo to the man who can blight such fair hopes—who can treacherously lure such a heart from its peaceful enjoyment, and the watchful protection of home—who can, coward-like, break the illusions that have won her, and destroy the confidence which love had inspired. Wo to him who has too early withdrawn the tender plant from the props and stays of moral discipline in which she has been nurtured, and yet made no effort to supply their place ; for on him be the responsibility of her errors—on him who has first taught her, by his example, to grow careless of her duty, and then exposed her with a weakened spirit, and unsatisfied heart, to the rude storms, and the wily temptations of a sinful world.

Never was there a bride more exempt from the prospect of such dangers than Mary Bingley. She was about to be united to the object of her purest, youngest love. He, whom she had loved in the artless simplicity of childhood, was he to whom she would now soon stand pledged at the altar with the deep devotion of a wife. Time, and experience in the dispositions and tastes of each other, had strengthened their mutual affection, till it seemed as if their attachment had wound itself into a part of their nature ; and whilst the triumphant happiness of successful love played over every feature of the bridegroom's face, he was not the less seriously impressed with that sacred responsi-

bility incurred by the husband—the welfare of a loving and dependent being.

The party assembled at Thornbury Park for the celebration of the marriage was not large, and, with the exception of Dacre, was composed entirely of the members of the family. Mr. Wakefield had been invited, but he had declined the invitation on the plea of ill health. He had accompanied his excuses to Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth with a very kind letter to Mary Bingley. It was in the same female hand as that in which his notes to Dacre in London had been written, and which he had concluded to be Mrs. Shepherd's. It contained the expression of warm and affectionate wishes for his niece's happiness, and the hope of seeing her and her husband whenever they came to town; and it concluded by begging her acceptance of a handsome present, as a small token of the good will of her affectionate uncle. Nothing could be more amiable, thought both Mary and Harry; and the sight of so many kind words in Mrs. Shepherd's handwriting convinced them more than ever of the goodness of her disposition.

The letter from Mr. Wakefield to Mr. Molesworth was written in the tremulous hand of the infirm old man himself; and Mr. Molesworth found less cause to be satisfied with its contents than had the lovers in that addressed to Mary. Mr. Wakefield did not wish to shrink from the kind promises of assistance he had made in favour of his niece; but he wished to make a change in the mode of conferring his gift. He had, at first, declared his intention of giving her the sum which would render interest sufficient to complete the income, without which Mr. Molesworth had determined to withhold his consent to the marriage of his son; but Mr. Wakefield now informed Mr. Molesworth, that one quarter only of that money would be paid on their marriage; that he should himself pay the interest of the remainder during his lifetime; and that, on his death, they would come into possession of the whole of the promised sum: moreover, he added, that, lest any uneasiness respecting this arrangement should be felt by the parties concerned, he could give them the satisfaction of knowing that he intended immediately to add this bequest to his will.

It was impossible for Mr. Molesworth to offer any objection to this arrangement. The objections he felt were not such as it was possible to state, without giving just cause of offence; but he sincerely regretted

that such a change should have been proposed. He imparted his feelings on the subject to Dacre; and Dacre, alone, sympathized with him in the regret. Harry and Mary were not disposed to give much attention to any arrangement that did not interfere with their marriage. John Molesworth knew that he should have, if required, both the power and the will to assist his brother, whenever his father could no longer do so; and Mrs. Molesworth only thought it a pity that Mr. Molesworth should get into one of his tiresome ways about nothing, when there were so many things of consequence to be settled for poor dear Mary, and for poor dear Harry, who could not now be persuaded to think of anything for themselves. Dacre, however, fully entered into Mr. Molesworth's feelings: not that he had any reason to doubt the kind and honourable intentions of Mr. Wakefield; but his mind misgave him when he thought of Mrs. Shepherd. In spite of all appearances of kindness on her part, he had never overcome certain doubts of her sincerity and truth; and he related to Mr. Molesworth, in support of his suspicions, the circumstance of the miniature. It was agreed by Mr. Molesworth and Dacre, that it would be but right, as well as prudent, that the young couple should make a point of going soon to London, in order to see Mr. Wakefield; and that they should keep up, by constant intercourse, the friendly feelings he had evinced towards Mary on the present occasion; and to that proposition they both yielded a ready consent.

The wedding day was come, and every preparation that could be devised had been made for the occasion. The *trousseau* was completed. Mrs. Molesworth's wedding gift of house-linen, for the little cottage that would henceforward be their home, was in readiness. The gifts of loving friends had been admired—the offerings of dependents had been tendered, and accepted with gratitude—the cake was ready sliced for distribution—the maid-servants now appear in their newest attire—poor Dash comes in, waddling with the huge white riband bow with which John has adorned him—and the village chimes are distinctly heard pealing their cheerful invitation to come to the altar.

The party is assembled in the library. Mrs. Plumer had been wondering this half hour how Mary will look. The bridesmaids assure her the dress is becoming. The bridegroom looks wistfully at the door to catch the first

glimpse of her appearance. The carriages are announced, and Mary, the gentle blushing bride, now enters the room, accompanied by Mr. Molesworth. With a smile on her lip, and a tear in her eye, she accepted Harry's arm, to lead her towards the little group that awaited her arrival to proceed to church. Princes might have envied them the majesty of their possessions. They each possessed the heart they had coveted; and their union, untainted by one thought on the pomp and circumstance of life, was now to be solemnized by a sacred rite, in the presence of approving friends. Tears were shed—and shed by her, who thought herself most blessed: but they were tears of hope, affection, piety, and gratitude; and as she threw herself into the arms of Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth, she felt the added happiness of being now, alike in name and feeling, a daughter to those who had cherished her like parents.

To Dacre it was a moving scene: it was the sight of all that happiness of domestic love—the display of all those ties of family union—which fate had denied to him. He had witnessed, as a spectator, the enjoyment of blessings he had sighed for, and yet never experienced. He had stood by the altar, and seen the hand given where the heart was fixed; he had listened to the words which had bound them for life; he had watched with friendly interest the bending figure of the youthful bride, who had just breathed holy vows,—her face concealed, and yet her love confessed,—and he had thought on Emily. He had, in fancy, arrayed her in that bridal robe: his imagination painted her in place of her who stood before him;—and then, for a moment, he tried to think of her as the bride of another;—but hope chased the thought, too painful for endurance, and quickly summoned to his mind the brightest vision she could raise. He gazed on the couple, now kneeling before him, and fancied he saw but the reflection in a glass of himself and Lady Emily. It was the delusion of an instant; and he awoke from his day-dream to the consciousness of painful doubt and fear. But it was not despair. No—the visit to Denham had made him feel that he need not despair. He thought of the look with which she bid him good-by! He thought of those words: “*I am never capricious:*” and he fondly hoped that when they met again it would be in the kindness with which they had parted.

"Dacre," said Harry Molesworth, approaching him, when the ceremony was concluded, "You are looking more than usually grave; and I cannot doubt the subject of your thoughts: I felt I owed so much to your successful intervention, that I wished you to witness the happiness you had promoted; but, perhaps, it has been selfish in me to ask your attendance."

Dacre shook him by the hand: "No—no," replied he, "you have not been selfish in giving me pleasure; and though I will not deny that all I have just witnessed may have heightened my wish to follow your example, it has, I assure you, afforded me also a ground of lasting comfort. I know not what fate may attend the success of my wishes for myself, but I have this day witnessed the fulfilment of those that I most warmly entertained for you."

Harry felt deeply his kindness, and, as he thanked him for its expression, added, in a more cheerful tone, "All will go well—depend upon it, Dacre; your fate is in your own hands: it must be so:"—and the warm-hearted happy bridegroom told himself it was impossible that such a friend could love in vain, or that such misery as unrequited attachment could exist in life.

## CHAPTER XXII.

L'humilité n'est souvent qu'une feinte soumission dont on se sert pour soumettre les autres; c'est un artifice de l'orgueil qui s'abaisse pour s'élever; et, bien qu'il se transforme en mille manières, il n'est jamais mieux déguisé, et plus capable de tromper, que lorsqu'il se cache sous la figure de l'humilité.

ROCHEFOUCAULT.

DACRE had promised Mr. Molesworth to call upon Mr. Wakefield on his return to town, in order to give him some account of the marriage, to which he had been so

her interference to him only as a proof of the goodness of her heart.

"Did he indeed, sir?" said Mrs. Shepherd: "that was very good of him! I was afraid at the time I had really offended him by speaking my mind too freely: but," added she, with increased emotion, "Mr. Wakefield is always very kind."

Dacre saw that she slightly applied her handkerchief to her eyes, as if to brush away a tear. He expressed his regret that anything unpleasant to her feelings should have arisen in the performance of an act of kindness.

Mrs. Shepherd did not deny that something unpleasant had arisen, but most amiably declared herself now amply repaid, and said she trusted Mr. Wakefield would never remember that what he had done for his niece had not originated in himself: she would even be obliged to Mr. Dacre never to mention to any body that she had ever taken any part whatever in the matter.

Then followed a few commonplace observations on commonplace topics, and Dacre felt that his visit had been sufficiently prolonged to have afforded her the opportunity of making any disclosures, had she intended to do so. Not the faintest allusion to the miniature had been made. As Dacre rose to depart, he repeated the promise of coming soon again to see Mr. Wakefield, and Mrs. Shepherd repeated her assurance of the pleasure it would give Mr. Wakefield to see him. He quitted the house, more than ever perplexed on the character of Mrs. Shepherd, and more disposed than he had yet been to reproach himself for his injustice towards one who had proved herself so disinterestedly kind.

On the following evening he received a short note from Mr. Wakefield himself, expressing his regret at the mistake which had deprived him of the pleasure of Mr. Dacre's visit on the preceding day, apprizing him of his intention to leave London for a short time, lest he should give himself the unnecessary trouble of calling again; and hoping to have the good fortune of seeing him, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth, whenever they arrived in town. Could Mrs. Shepherd have any object in preventing Mr. Wakefield's seeing him again? or could Mr. Wakefield have any objection to seeing him? or was it all the result

of mere accident? Dacre pondered over these alternatives long and often, but he could not determine on which to fix.

The commencement of the London season was now at hand, and many were the hearts which beat quick at the thoughts of its commencement. Many a hope and many a sorrow were again roused into being by its approach; and in the unromantic scenes of gay frivolity which the nineteenth century yearly exhibits in a luxurious and civilized metropolis, every variety of human passion was again about to be endured, under the smooth varnish of social politeness.

Scenes and manners so frivolous and cold may, to some, appear at variance with the existence of such feelings; and there is always a disposition to invest the events of past ages with a character of romance, to which they were no better entitled than the present. It is true that there is nothing in the events of other days to detract from their picturesqueness. They are free from all the details which clog and disfigure those of our own. They may stand out in bold relief. Their effect upon our imagination is unimpeded by the homely realities which confuse and embarrass those we can witness in action. But though the age of chivalry is past, the age of nature and feeling remains. Love at a *déjeuné*, jealousy at Vauxhall, and despair in a well-furnished boudoir, may be less soul-stirring—less high-sounding—less heart-rending, than the vows of crested knights—the gallantry of a tournament—the breaking of lances for damsels long pledged—the conflicts of rivals in presence of thousands—the cell of the recluse, and the walls of a convent. But ere we give preference to these more ancient demonstrations of passion, let us pause for a moment, and ask whether it is to the cause or to the effect of their emotion, that we yield our ready sympathy—whether we do not estimate by a false standard the feelings and actions of our forefathers—and whether, by thus losing the proportion they truly bore to each other, we do not give more than justice awards to the past, and less than she can claim to the present. We measure the value of their deeds and sacrifices by the habits of civilization, forgetting that the sensibility which enhances their worth is the growth of a greater refinement than could have co-existed with such manners and institutions; and forgetting that, little as the luxury of the day may *seem* congenial with the joys



and sorrows of romance, yet in being placed above the reach of physical suffering, we are spared an interruption, rather than an aggravation, of the purer emotions of the mind. There can be no doubt but that mental cultivation, refinement of taste, and the exercise of our softer and kindlier feelings, increases the sensitiveness of our disposition, and calls forth those sympathies which bind us most closely to our fellow-creatures; and, ere we waste our regrets on the imaginary loss of such sentiments, we must remember the improbability of their decay under circumstances so favourable to their culture and strength.

Lady Emily Somers had certainly been one of those in whom education and habit had alike combined to cherish every feeling which nature had implanted. Her nature was to love and to be loved, and she had been nurtured and brought up in the atmosphere of affection. Her sensibility had not been deadened by the voice of unkindness. She had known no vicissitudes of fortune—she had borne no affliction—she had suffered no illness. The occasional irritability of her father's temper had sometimes cost her a pang; but then it was her pleasing task to dispel the frown that was gathered on his brow; and, though she had watched with anxious care the bed of sickness, she never yet had failed to impart to the sufferer the cheering influence of her own sanguine disposition. She had met with all the admiration from the world which her beauty and her charms deserved, and yet she was unconscious of distinction. She had always been lovely—she had always been engaging, and she had been admired and loved from her infancy. Admiration came not to her as the welcome tribute to an ambitious vanity, but as that to which she had been so accustomed, that it seemed a part of life itself; she thought the better of human nature for the kindness she experienced, but knew not that she created the feelings she approved. Her life had been but one bright chain of smiles, and joy, and hope—her first and only sorrow had been the fear of Dacre's inconstancy, and the having unconsciously misled her mother, respecting her feelings towards him. But now she had met him at Denham, her confidence in his love was reassured. She had since confided all to her mother, and she had been folded to that mother's heart, and thanked for the motives that had restrained her confi-

dence, at a time when she needed and desired the comfort of a parent's support.

Lady Kendal could not be expected to yield so ready a belief as her daughter, to the stability of Dacre's attachment ; yet she was sufficiently convinced to promise not to check his attentions by any coldness of manner, should he be disposed to renew them in London ; but both mother and daughter agreed that, after so much inconsistency on his part, every overt act of advance must originate with him. There would be a want of delicacy in any act, on their part, which might be construed into the desire to seek him.

Emily was now too happy to feel her wonted alarms respecting Dacre's conduct. She had suffered so much under the impression of his coldness, and the necessity of her own reserve, that her heart was relieved by this state of comparative ease ; and, with that elasticity of spirits, which a life of happiness had, as yet, preserved unimpaired, the joyousness of her nature returned, and displayed itself in the very tread of her step and the sound of her voice. But as she bounded up the stairs, chased her little brother round the garden, or hummed scraps of her songs as she danced along the passage, her mother's eye followed her with the tender solicitude of maternal anxiety,—trembling lest this security of happiness should be based on delusion—trembling lest the light-hearted innocence of the young confiding heart of her child should be blighted or deceived by the coldness or inconstancy of him who had won it.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

I have follow'd thee a year at least,  
 And never stopp'd myself to rest,  
 And yet can thee o'ertake no more  
 Than this day can the day that went before.

COWLEY.

PARLIAMENT had met, and Lord Kendal announced to the family the day on which the removal to London was to be made. Much as Emily rejoiced in the prospect of again meeting Dacre, she was unusually nervous at quitting the country. She knew that, ere she again returned to this home, a great and important change in her own condition would have occurred. She could never again visit it with the same feelings as those with which she now left it; and the certainty of approaching change can never be contemplated with indifference. The vagueness of the future excites apprehension even in the minds of the young and sanguine.

Emily knew that she should probably never return to this place as her home. When next she visited it, it would probably be as a guest in the house of her father. She would have become a wife—the fond devoted wife of Francis Dacre: and would he love her in return as she hoped to be loved?—a fearful doubt, which all have felt, when fancy has dared to image what the heart desires. Emily felt the tears start in her eyes.

Another thought glanced across her mind:—Was it possible she should return to this house, as her home—unchanged in name—unchanged, perchance, in the eyes of the world? and yet, oh! how bitter, how great, how hard to bear, would be that change which should have turned the bright stream of rapid hope that now lighted her path into the still and gloomy abyss of darkened joys.

She shuddered at the very thought, and gladly took refuge from the contemplation of the future, by busying herself, with more than usual activity, in all the little arrangements necessary to be made previous to the annual removal to town.

The evening was come on which Lady Emily was to make her first appearance that season in London. An evening party was to take place at one of the houses where great assemblies make great crowds. Lady Kendal announced to her daughter her intention of accepting the invitation. Whether Lady Emily did or did not bestow a little more than ordinary time and attention on her toilette that night, must be left to the imagination of the reader; but even if Lord Kendal did send her word twice that the horses ought not be kept waiting in the cold, surely no woman will deem it unnatural if she was longer than usual in performing the duties of her toilette.

Emily cast a furtive glance around the room at which they first entered. Groups of people were to be seen—some sitting on the ottomans, others standing in front of the sofas, others enjoying the social parties they had formed in the corners; and here and there, behind the shelter of a door, or the protection of a table, the well-known flirtation of the preceding year was renewed with fresh zest.

Dacre was not to be seen amongst these stragglers of the outskirts: and as Lady Kendal and her daughter moved along into the next apartment, Lady Emily flattered herself that, in so dense a mass, not a friend or an acquaintance could be missing. Their progress was checked at every step by the interrogatories of the season; and the same eternal question of, "Have you been long in town?" was asked and answered again and again. The tour of the rooms was at last performed: at every change of place, and every opening in the crowd, Emily had hoped that Dacre might appear; but she now felt sure that not a single face had escaped her observation, and that Dacre could not, therefore, be among the numerous guests of the overflowing house. She grew weary of the party, and assured her mother that she had no wish to stay longer. Lady Kendal also was fatigued; and, placing themselves near the door in expectation of the hurried departure, to which

they both looked forward with eagerness, they gladly accepted Sir Edward Bradford's offer to ask for the carriage.

Sir Edward had been gone just long enough, for Lady Kendal to wonder he had not returned, when the partial dispersion of the crowd left a clear vista to the further extremity of the room. When near the door, Lady Emily cast one more glance along the moving multitude; and her eye rested for an instant on the figures of two people in seeming contemplation of the wonders of a marble vase at the upper end of the room. One of the gentlemen was pointing out with much action some beauty or defect in the form of the object of their attention, while the other stood passively by. Lady Emily immediately perceived that the speaker was Mr. Preston, and she thought she could not be mistaken in the other. Nor was she: in another instant his face was turned towards her; and she saw, and was seen by, the sole object of her evening's thoughts.

Mr. Preston's little essay on the vases and *tazze* was cut short in a moment, and Dacre moved as if he would have approached her: but the crowd had again mingled, and Lady Emily lost sight of him. Again she saw his head peering between a multitude of others, and looking in the direction of the place where she and her mother were standing: she was sure he was advancing towards them; one more effort would free him from all impediments: but no! at that moment Mrs. Ashby and her daughters crossed his path. The hands of all three were most graciously extended; they were all three so glad to see him; they had been so anxious to hear from him some account of their friends at Thornberry Park; and could he tell them when Mrs. Harry Molesworth would come to town? Dacre could tell them nothing. The common courtesy due from a gentleman arrested his steps while they spoke, but he could hardly command his impatience sufficiently to listen or reply to a word that delayed his approach to Lady Emily; and Mrs. Ashby thought him more strange than ever for not wishing to profit by this opportunity of talking to her eldest daughter.

"I have just succeeded in getting your carriage," said Sir Edward, quickly approaching Lady Kendal; "it will be at the door in a moment; but you must make haste," said he, offering his arm to Lady Emily, "or it will have

driven off, and the crowd of carriages to-night is quite appalling."

Dacre succeeded in extricating himself from the unwelcome civilities of Mrs. Ashby and her daughters, but as he looked towards the place where he had seen Lady Emily standing the instant before, he saw, to his dismay, that she was gone. He advanced a step—he saw that she had accepted Sir Edward's arm, and was walking fast away from the spot which he had been so anxiously endeavouring to reach. He was sure that both Lady Kendal and Lady Emily had seen and recognized him; and the fear that they had wished to elude his advances checked his further pursuit. Dacre returned to his home disappointed and mortified. He had gone to two assemblies that night, in the hope of meeting Lady Emily—choosing first the one at which he fancied it most likely to see her; and, not succeeding in that attempt, he had proceeded to — House. His arriving there late had prevented Lady Emily from perceiving him before; and this had, unluckily, occasioned her willingness to retire from the party so much earlier than she would have otherwise desired.

But disappointed as he was at this failure to his hoped-for pleasure, Dacre would not, and did not now believe that Emily was either false or cold. The more he had pondered over the visit to Denham, the better he was satisfied on that point; but he feared that Lady Kendal was less disposed than her daughter to regard him with friendly eyes, and in that fancied opposition to his hopes, he found sufficient cause of anxiety and apprehension to chase away all chance of sleep that night.

And to what feeling did this *contretemps* give rise in Emily's mind? She was conscious that, by their abrupt departure, they must have seemed to elude his presence. She was conscious that Dacre had looked upon Sir Edward as his rival; and she knew that he must have seen her accept his arm, to lead her from the place to which Dacre was approaching. She was sure that Dacre would feel that her conduct towards him had been repulsive and unkind, and yet she knew that she had endured still more than she had inflicted; and that this sacrifice of both her own and his feelings had been the result of circumstances, over which she had no control. Her evening had been like

one of those tormenting dreams in which the object desired is always at hand, and can never be reached ; and she went home vexed and dispirited, yet impatient for another opportunity to meet, and correct the erroneous opinions he might have formed from the events of this evening. Nothing could appear more trivial, more common-place, more unromantic, more uninteresting, than the circumstances which led to so much vexation that night. But what mattered it where the scene was laid, and how poor the dramatic effect to the spectators ? The incidents that befall us in the drama of life must owe their dignity rather to the magnitude of their effect than to the seeming importance of their cause.

More than once in the course of that week had both Dacre and Emily hoped that the meeting would occur ; but fate had willed it otherwise. Lady Kendal had allowed Emily to decide in the choice of amusements that each evening afforded ; but, unfortunately, she and Dacre, by each selecting those places at which they thought it most probable the other would be found, contrived always to miss by their mutual desire to meet ; and Dacre began to fear that Lady Emily must be unwell, and Emily began to fear that Dacre's resolution of going abroad might have been strengthened, if not put into execution, through the unlucky circumstances that attended their first rencontre.

In the meantime, Harry Molesworth and his bride arrived in London. Mary had never been in town since her childhood, and in every sight and scene the charm of novelty was added to the delight of seeing all that was to be seen, under the protection of her husband. An opera box had been procured for them by Dacre ; and Mary was to go, for the first time in her life, to hear and see the wonders of that stage. The opera was *Nina* ; and Mary alternately studied the words in the book, and watched, with the eager curiosity of a novice, every change of expression, every tone in the voice of that actress and singer who has associated in our minds a feeling of reality with every character she has played. Mary sat and gazed like one enchanted : but the wanderings of the broken-hearted "*Pazza per l'amore*," struck no chord of sympathetic woe upon the ear of that happy bride. The tear that glistened for a moment in her eye was the passing tribute of a grateful heart, that had escaped those sorrows with which others

have been visited ; and as her husband said, with playful tenderness, " Mary, would you have lost your senses for love of me ?" she smiled, and pressed his hand, in token of that love on which she knew her very life depended.

The last scene of the opera had commenced when Dacre came into their box, and heard with pleasure of the enjoyment with which Mary and Harry had been contemplating the representation of those sorrows and trials from which they had themselves so entirely escaped.

He had not been many minutes in the box when he perceived that not very far off were seated Lady Kendal and Lady Emily. He saw they were alone : he put up his glass to gain a better view of their countenances. Their faces were turned to the stage, Lady Kendal looked grave—he thought even sad—and Emily was in tears. It was evident that their attention was devoted to the stage, and that Lady Emily was completely overcome by the touching scene before her. Did the wearing disappointments of the preceding week suggest to her mind the appalling thought, that wretchedness like this might be in store for herself ? Did the consciousness that no love had exceeded in strength the devotedness of her own, make her shudder at the consequences its blighted hopes could produce ? or did she, with feelings less tangible, and fears less defined, look on with that sadness of spirits, which lends but a feeble resistance to the impression of melancholy from wherever it comes. The sight of Emily in tears, from whatever cause they flowed, was one which riveted Dacre's attention, and Harry soon perceived, by the direction of his glass, the object of attraction.

" Why don't you go to them ?" said Harry in a whisper, whilst Mary was engaged with the Opera book.

" I told you," replied Dacre, " that I thought her mother avoided me the other night." I cannot bear the idea of forcing myself upon her.

" Take my advice," said Harry, " and go directly,—all you told me of the meeting at — House might have been accidental, and you need not stay five minutes if your presence seems unwelcome."

It is always pleasant to be advised to do what one wishes ; and Dacre had never thought Harry more sensible than in thus sanctioning by his counsel, that which he



hesitated to do. In a few minutes more Dacre found himself in Lady Kendal's box, and had reason to be satisfied with the good sense of Harry's advice. Lady Emily had given a little involuntary start when he entered, and for a few minutes seemed unable to speak—but Lady Kendal not only shook him warmly by the hand, but talked to him in a manner that at once set him free from all fear lest she should regard his visit as intrusive.

Lady Emily had been introduced by Mrs. Wentworth to Miss Bingley at the Hatton ball; and whilst Dacre was standing in the Molesworth box, she had recognized in Mrs. Molesworth the person whose looks had there attracted her attention. She inquired of Dacre, if it was not Mr. Harry Molesworth from whom he was just come.

Dacre answered in the affirmative; and he then mentioned that the immediate object of their coming to London was to visit Mrs. Molesworth's uncle; that they had come for a short time, and that his friend was anxious to afford his wife what amusement he could whilst in town.

The conversation on the Molesworths continued; and Dacre, in reply to some questions, told them how retired a life Mary had hitherto led, and that though her husband had for the last two years entered a good deal into society, yet at present she was unacquainted with any one out of the immediate circle in which she had been brought up.

Lady Kendal expressed a good-natured wish to be acquainted with both husband and wife, and proposed that, as Lady Emily had been introduced to her at Hatton, she should go to call upon her.

Emily could hardly contain her gratitude to her mother for this proposition; for she knew that Dacre would feel as a kindness to himself, any civility to the wife of his friend.

Dacre was much too strongly impressed with the pleasure it must afford any one to receive a visit from Lady Emily, not at once to accept the offer in her name, and the day after the morrow was the time which Lady Kendal named for her daughter to call upon Mrs. Harry Molesworth. The etiquette of an Opera box obliged Dacre in time to cede his place to the numerous visitors who now flocked in to disturb the pleasure of the remainder of Lady Emily's evening. But he had ascertained at what place he might meet them again, and retired that night to his home full of hopeful anticipation for the future.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Celestial happiness, whene'er she stoops  
To visit earth, one shrine the goddess finds,  
And one alone, to make her sweet amends  
For absent heav'n—the bosom of a friend.

YOUNG.

THE next day Dacre found himself, according to an appointment, at the hotel with the Molesworths, in order that he might accompany them from thence to Mr. Wakefield's. Harry Molesworth was alone when he entered, and inquired immediately whether Dacre had repented having gone into Lady Kendal's box.

Dacre smiled, and told him all that had passed—then, after a moment's pause, he added, "I believe I begged of you some time ago, not even to impart to Mrs. Molesworth one word on this subject."

"Nor have I," exclaimed Harry, very warmly; "it is the only subject on which I have been reserved to her; but I considered my promise to you as sacred."

"I was sure you would," rejoined Dacre, "but I now wish to free you from that promise. I am sure Mrs. Molesworth will never betray what you wish should be kept secret, and I cannot bear to be the cause of even one subject of reserve between you—so tell her all you please—you know," added he, smiling, "I feel safe in your hands, for you cannot affect to despise me for feeling towards another what you are both feeling towards each other."

Harry laughed, and would have thanked him most sincerely for this release from the difficult task of keeping anything secret from his wife, when the door opened, and Mary, ready equipped for the drive, made her appearance.

Dacre had imparted to the Molesworth's the failure of his last attempt to see Mr. Wakefield, and the contents of

the note that had followed it: and though Harry was confident that the mistake about the hour was quite accidental, and the sudden determination to leave London probably a whim, and though they were going to call at his house by appointment, Dacre was speculating during the drive upon the chances of Mr. Wakefield's being again from home. But this time there had been no misunderstanding, and when they were ushered in, Mr. Wakefield was found, sitting over the fire quite alone, in the full enjoyment of the Advertisement sheet of the newspaper.

Mr. Wakefield was in manner just as usual, kissed his niece, turned her face to the light, declared she was very like her poor mother, said it was many a year since he had seen her, that she could only just toddle about the room when last she was in that house, and remarked, "How wonderfully soon people do grow up now-a-days!" To Harry he said just what might reasonably be expected that he would say—told him he must take good care of his wife; asked Mary if she meant to go to sea with her husband, and then reminded them, with a chuckle, "that if they did not quarrel for a whole year, they might claim a flitch of bacon!"

Dacre was beginning to wonder whether Mrs. Shepherd would make her appearance, when Mr. Wakefield, addressing himself to Mary, said, "My dear, there is a friend of mine who is very anxious to see you and Captain Molesworth. Perhaps Mr. Dacre has mentioned Mrs. Shepherd to you."

They assented.

"Well then, my dear, perhaps you know already the sad story of poor Mrs. Shepherd's misfortunes. Did Mr. Dacre tell you that her real name is Harrison? She is Lieutenant Harrison's widow, though we call her Mrs. Shepherd, because I was used to that name, and that poor dear boy who is now no more," said he, looking at the picture of the child, "he always called her Shepherd, so we never changed her name; but Mrs. Shepherd is a most respectable, praiseworthy lady, I assure you, my dear, and has gone through a great deal of trouble."

Dacre assured Mr. Wakefield that he had already told them of the severe trials to which Mrs. Shepherd had been put, "but," continued he, "I could not exactly remember

in what action you said Lieutenant Harrison had been killed."

"That is just what *I* can never remember," replied Mr. Wakefield; "I know he was not killed upon the spot, but I have forgotten the details of his death—and that, you know, is just what one cannot ask her to tell one again."

"I should have much liked to know whether Lieutenant Harrison was ever reckoned like my father," said Dacre, "or whether I was deceived in thinking the miniature I saw on that table was so striking a resemblance. Do you think, sir," continued he, addressing Mr. Wakefield in rather a supplicating tone, "that you could procure for me once more the sight of that picture; if on any occasion when it would not be very distressing to Mrs. Shepherd to make such a request, I should really feel most deeply obliged to you."

"Certainly, my dear sir,—certainly, if you wish it, there can be no objection; but as ladies, you know, have rather uncertain spirits, one must choose one's opportunity. Poor Mrs. Shepherd's nerves have been so sadly shaken, that, unless she begins first, I never like to allude to her husband;—it upsets her for the day, poor thing! but I will ask! I will ask, Mr. Dacre, the first opportunity."

Dacre thanked him.

Mary inquired if Mrs. Shepherd was at home, and hoped they might be introduced to her.

"I will ring the bell, and send to her to come down," said Mr. Wakefield. "Do you know, Mary, my dear," continued he, "that she is so scrupulous, that she would not come down when you first came, because she said that near relations might like better to meet without her."

Mary said, "How very considerate!" though she felt it was difficult to conceive an interview which could have been less incommoded by the presence of witnesses.

"Ah!" said Mr. Wakefield, half tired with the effort of pulling out the handle of the bell, and leaning back on his chair—"Ah! she is a good soul as ever lived, and I hope my dear, you and she will be very good friends. You will find her a little shy at first, perhaps. Do you know, Mr. Dacre, she says she feels herself now here in an awkward position, and that, unless I mention who she is beforehand, she is always afraid people may wonder what business she has here."

Dacre felt conscious of having always been among the number of those who had so wondered, but luckily, before he was called upon to reply, the servant appeared in answer to the bell; and as he closed the door, the garrulous old man resumed the thread of his discourse by saying, with a laugh, in which imbecility was more prominent than merriment, "Mrs. Shepherd need not be afraid of scandal, because she takes care of me in my old age. Old age has not many privileges, but I can tell you, young gentleman, that it has one over youth. Nobody gossips about old men like me. I need not make a fool of myself by marrying at my time of life, to be nursed when I am ill, and amused when I am well; so we jog on very comfortably together, and very lucky it is for me that poor Mrs. Shepherd has no other home; I should not know what to do without her."

Mrs. Shepherd soon made her appearance. The introduction to Captain and Mrs. Molesworth was made; and to them, who felt that to her friendly offices they had been partly indebted for Mr. Wakefield's kindness to Mary, it was certainly no effort to receive her with all the civility and even cordiality which a first introduction could claim. Mrs. Shepherd alluded in course of time to that mistake in her note by which Dacre had missed Mr. Wakefield, and hoped he had forgiven her stupidity.

"Ah! my dear sir," said Mr. Wakefield, "even the ladies can make mistakes sometimes, but it is not often Mrs. Shepherd is in the wrong."

Dacre politely insinuated his conviction that she was generally right, and asked Mr. Wakefield if he had staid long out of town.

"Not many days," he replied, "but it did me a great deal of good."

Dacre hoped he had not been unwell.

"I did not feel particularly ill," replied Mr. Wakefield, "but Dr. Davies seemed quite uneasy at my state; and said that nothing but change of air would do. I can't travel far—and really I did not know what to do, or where to go, when Mrs. Shepherd was so kind as to propose my going with her to visit a first cousin of hers. It was such a God-send to me at the moment, for he has a nice house not far from town, and I was very comfortable there."

Really, Mr. Dacre, houses are wonderfully comfortable now—I think even more so than in my young days.”

Mrs. Shepherd had been talking to Mary during this dialogue between Mr. Wakefield and Dacre, and was apparently quite unconscious of the eulogiums passed on the comforts of her cousin's house, and the benefit of fresh air. At last the party rose to take their leave, and as Mrs. Shepherd stood for a moment out of hearing, Dacre reminded Mr. Wakefield of his promise about the miniature.

“I'll not forget—I'll not forget, my good sir,—it is a very natural wish on your part.” Dacre thanked him, and said he would call again in a short time to hear the result of his petition to Mrs. Shepherd.

It need hardly be said, that during the drive from Mr. Wakefield's to the hotel, the visit was duly discussed by the Molesworths and Dacre. Mary had been rather shocked at finding that the ravages of time were so perceptible on the mind and appearance of her uncle.

In truth, he was of an age at which many still retain both physical and intellectual powers in a far greater state of perfection—but affliction, an overwrought application to the business in which he had been for so many years engaged, ill health, and a disposition to hypochondriasis, had weakened him both in body and mind to a degree that was somewhat premature; and though Dacre had very accurately described Mr. Wakefield's state to Harry Molesworth on returning from his first visit, yet both he and Mary had so entirely associated him in their minds with that very sensible act which had enabled their marriage to take place, that the recollection of his approaching imbecility was forgotten, and came upon her with both surprise and regret.

Dacre was anxious to know what impression Mrs. Shepherd had made upon them. They both acknowledged that her countenance was not particularly pleasing—and they were rather struck with her manners being more underbred than they expected in an officer's widow. She was at once embarrassed and familiar; but then this might be only one of the disguises of that great disguiser of heart and manners—shyness, and Mrs. Shepherd had said many kind little things to Mary, and had contrived to let Harry know how very much she admired his wife: and they were both quite persuaded that they should like her very much

when the disadvantages of her first look and address were forgotten.

Dacre felt less certain of this, but was silent ; for there was no use in endeavouring to prejudice their minds against one of whom his knowledge was so slight, and his suspicions so vague.

The next day was that on which Lady Kendal had fixed for Lady Emily's visit to Mary ; and true to her intention, on that day Lady Emily came.

Mary was at home and alone when Emily entered.

Emily was not habitually shy, but she could not resist at first a greater feeling of embarrassment than she could, or rather than she would, account for—but the gentleness of Mary, and the liveliness of Emily, soon overcame their preliminary awkwardness, and they then entered with ease and pleasure into conversation. Their most natural topic in common was Dacre. Mary spoke of the years of friendship that had subsisted between him and her husband,—of the melancholy state in which their neighbour, poor Lord Hexham, had lingered for months—and of the unwearied attention which Dacre had paid to his uncle ; of the affection with which he was regarded by all the people round Hexham, and of the little of either love or respect that the present owner, Mr. Crofton, had inspired in the neighbourhood, during his short residence at Hexham ; and then she wound up this discourse on Mr. Dacre, by saying how grateful she must ever feel for his kindness to her and to Harry, at a time when they needed his assistance.

Though Mary was always diffident, and sometimes shy, she was never reserved ; and, when once she was at her ease, there was an artless simplicity of character about her that made her open. She had no idea of concealment ; and if, therefore, she had the courage to speak at all, she always said exactly what she thought. Harry was well aware of this fact, and he knew that Dacre's character could not be in safer hands than in those of the grateful Mary, who saw in him the kind mediator who had served the cause of their marriage, and the warmly attached friend of himself. When, therefore, he heard that Lady Emily was to call upon Mary, he determined to postpone the disclosure which Dacre had given him leave to make, till after the first visit was over. He knew that the con-

ness of having a secret, the fancied obligation to beforehand of what she should say, and what she not to say, would at once destroy the ease with she would otherwise speak of him, and might prefer rendering him that ample justice which she sure of doing when unfettered by any fancied re-

ry showed his sense in this resolution—and while gave utterance to her praises of Dacre, Lady Emily once, by the ease of her manner, that she was so unconscious of the deep interest with which they listened to, that she dared to feed the flame which had so innocently lighted, by making such observation or asking such questions, as should prolong the sation on that subject. It was well for her that she accidentally placed herself with her back to the light ; she sat and listened to the exciting theme of Dacre's, her heart glowed—her cheek flushed—her eye d—and, had Mary distinctly seen her face, that face have proved a traitor to her secret. But who has oved, and not gloried in the praises of its object ? as ever admired, and not caught with delight, in the ration of others, the echo of their own feelings ? has not known the heartfelt satisfaction, the triumph of thus arming and strengthening their passion he encomiums of less interested observers ? ily hung with peculiar delight on each word of s that told of Dacre's merits. There were many would have commended his attractions because he re fashion—many might have commended his talents, nversation, his manner, and his looks ; but Mary had n of his heart ;—she had told of his affection—his ess—his benevolence—his friendship ; and whilst r drank deep of the fascinating draught that nourished ve, she blessed the hand which had so unconsciously t to her lips.

leally, mama," exclaimed Emily, when she returned her visit, "I do think Mrs. Harry Molesworth is the charming person I ever knew—she is quite delightful—am sure you will like her so much. She has pro- to call upon me, and then you must make her acquaintance."

ly Kendal smiled, and said she desired no better.



"I hope she will call to-morrow or next day," said Emily; "did you not think her very pretty the other night?"

"Not particularly," said Lady Kendal; "but I could not see her very well at the Opera?"

"No," replied Emily, "that is true—she does not look brilliant, perhaps, at a distance, but she is lovely when you talk to her—such a charming expression!"

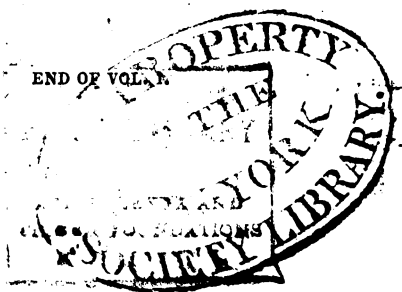
"I never knew you take such a fancy before to any one on so slight an acquaintance," said Lady Kendal.

"No! I do not think I ever did," replied Emily; "but she is so unaffected, and there is such an air of sincerity and truth in all she says, that inspires one with confidence in her disposition at once."

Lady Kendal smiled, and said, "besides all her own merits, she has, you know, dear, the additional charm of being wife to the dear friend of ——"

Emily coloured, and put her hand playfully before her mother's mouth. "Don't go on," said she—"I know what you would say; but I really liked Mrs. Molesworth for her own sake, quite independent of all other considerations:" and so she thought she did—for it is no easy task to sift and arrange the various feelings that have combined to make one strong impression.

Lady Kendal kissed her, and said she had no doubt Mrs. Molesworth was "a very charming person;" whilst she ardently hoped that a few more meetings between Dacre and Emily would put an end to a suspense from which, in her anxiety for her daughter's happiness, she suffered not a little. Dacre's manner at the opera had given her more confidence; and like the lovers themselves, she was anxious for the next meeting, though determined, in the present state of affairs, to commit no such overt act of encouragement as that of inviting him to her house.



# D A C R E :

A NOVEL.

EDITED BY

THE COUNTESS OF MORLEY.

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Un ouvrage d'imagination ne doit pas avoir un bût moral, mais un résultat moral. Il doit ressembler, à cet égard, à la vie humaine, qui n'a pas un bût, - mais qui toujours a un résultat dans lequel la morale trouve nécessairement sa place.

BENJAMIN CONSTANT.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

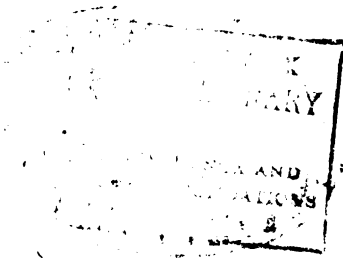
VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA

CAREY, LEA & BLANCHARD.

1835.





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D A C R



## CHAPTER I.

*Les femmes peuvent moins surmonter leur coquetterie que leurs passions.*

ROCHEFOUCAULT.

"How distraight you are !" said Lady Anne Preston, as she sat by Dacre at a ball, and in vain endeavoured to rouse his languid attention to all she had to say.

"Am I?" said Dacre, with a look that verified the observation.

"I fear I have bored you past endurance," said Lady Anne with a fascinating smile ; "indeed I know I must be quite a bore with those who dispose me to talk. Now own the truth. I shall not be the least affronted. Have you not been dying to get away for the last half hour?"

"What can make you think so?" said Dacre, who, if not particularly amused that evening with Lady Anne, had had no desire to go away from the seat near the door, which afforded him a view of the coming guests.

"Why I think so," continued Lady Anne, "is a secret I need not impart. I dare say your own conscience can tell you."

"No, indeed," replied Dacre ; "my conscience does not charge me with having had any wish to move."

"Then I am sure," replied Lady Anne, gaily, "that it has been the comfort of a chair, and not the pleasure of my

company, that has reconciled you to this place ; for you have hardly listened to a word I have said."

"You do me injustice, I assure you, Lady Anne," replied Dacre; and again he stole a side-way glance at the door, to see who was coming in.

"I hope," said Lady Anne, after a slight pause, and in a graver tone, "that you have given up that foolish plan of going abroad. Society cannot afford to lose you."

"Oh, if you think I should be missed, I had certainly better stay," replied Dacre, with a smile that was not sentimental.

"What a very provoking person you are!" rejoined Lady Anne; "you will sometimes take in earnest what I mean in joke, and take in joke what I mean in earnest. I am quite serious in saying that your loss must and would be felt; but I verily believe," added she, after a moment's hesitation, "that you are so *insouciant* yourself, that you cannot believe that every body else is not equally indifferent."

"Do you call me *insouciant*?" replied Dacre. "I have often wished to Heaven I was so, but the wish has never made me so."

Lady Anne looked at him, for he had spoken with more warmth than she had heard him speak that evening, and she thought he would have turned his eyes on her, when he thus denied a want of feeling; but no—he looked on the ground as he spoke, and when he raised his head, his eyes again wandered to the door. Lady Anne was piqued; and another short silence ensued.

"I see the Ashbys are here to-night, standing behind Lady Whitby like her ladies in waiting," observed Lady Anne, as she put up her glass to her eye.

Dacre looked for them in the right direction, and fully assented to the fact of their being there.

"I suppose the youngest girl, Cecilia, I think they call her, will succeed at last in marrying that good-looking youth, George Saville: he is talking to her now, I see: has he any fortune?"

"Not much, I believe," replied Dacre; "but then his waistcoats and chains would be a very handsome settlement."

"*Que voulez-vous?*" said Lady Anne, laughing. "Surely you would have every one cultivate the gifts of nature;

and as beauty has been her only gift to him, it is obviously his duty to devote his time and money to its care and cultivation."

The Ashbys and George Saville furnished a few more observations, and then Lady Anne carelessly remarked,—

"How dreadfully afraid of you the Ashbys used to be at Hatton!"

Dacre looked surprised.

"Why do you look so astonished?" pursued Lady Anne.

"Because," rejoined Dacre, with an incredulous smile, "I fear I am too unimportant a personage to alarm either the Ashbys or any one else."

"Is it possible," said Lady Anne, "that you can know yourself so little, as not to be aware that you are just the sort of person of whom one is afraid?"

Dacre smiled.

"Why do you say, of whom *one* is afraid? surely fear of me must be a constitutional ailment in the Ashbys; nobody else, I should think, shared their alarm."

"You are quite mistaken," replied Lady Anne, more seriously: "I share their feelings on that subject, though not, perhaps, from quite the same cause; but I own, Mr. Dacre, there is nobody of whom I stand in greater awe than yourself."

Dacre regarded her with unfeigned surprise; and Lady Anne had now, at least, succeeded in gaining his attention."

"You may look surprised, and, if you please, you may not believe me; but I adhere to my confession: I am, and always have been, more afraid of you than of any body I have ever yet known."

Dacre begged her to explain.

Lady Anne reddened, as she replied, with some little emotion, "It is hardly fair of you to ask my reasons; and why should you be incredulous? Surely there is nothing so extraordinary for poor mortals to stand thus in awe of each other, as to make you disbelieve me! Cannot you fancy that the consciousness of many faults may produce the fear of losing the good opinion of one whose friendship is valued? Cannot you fancy that the consciousness of

inferiority in acquirements—in conversation—in everything—may produce the fear of being irksome; and may not then a mere chance variation of spirits be sufficient to sound the alarm of being disapproved or shunned, and thus tinge with fear every feeling of friendship and respect?"

"Yes," replied Dacre, "I can perfectly conceive a case in which all this might be felt," and his mind reverted to all he had experienced with respect to Lady Emily; "but," continued he, recollecting himself, "as happily nature has placed Lady Anne above any just grounds for apprehensions of this kind, you must remember that the question respecting myself is still left untouched, and I shall therefore consider your fear of me as one of those instances in which I have had the stupidity to mistake joke for earnest."

"Think it what you please," said Lady Anne, looking kindly at him.

"Then I will think it mere *persiflage*."

"Would it were!" said Lady Anne, in a voice that might have been audible to Dacre, but he made no reply, and there was a moment's silence, and again he cast his eyes towards the door.

"Is Preston here to-night?" was Dacre's next question.

Lady Anne was then certain her power was gone. Vexed with herself, and angry with him, she just answered his question, and immediately rose from her seat; and whilst wounded to the quick by this blow to her vanity, she meditated fresh conquests to reap fresh disappointments.

In a few minutes more Dacre also quitted his seat.

Lady Kendal and Lady Emily made their appearance.

Dacre approached, and was kindly received by both mother and daughter. He and Lady Emily danced together, and talked together, and then the world began also to talk. And again they met, and again they talked,—and more and more people observed that they did so; and by the end of the week it had been whispered round the room that there never was such a flirtation as between Francis Dacre and Lady Emily Somers—that it must soon be declared—that it was probably settled already—that he had very likely proposed on Monday at the ball—that it was a

very long attachment—quite a recent acquaintance—that Lady Kendal had made a set at him—and that the Kendals could not bear the marriage—and every other such contradictory version of the details of a fact of which none now doubted the speedy acknowledgment.

But Dacre had not yet proposed; and the consideration that had withheld him from so doing was that which made Lady Kendal rejoice that he had not yet come to an open declaration. Lord Kendal was gone out of town to pay an annual visit to one of his estates, not very far distant from London. He had been absent about a fortnight, and Lady Kendal was anxiously hoping that she should be able to inform her husband of the attachment that subsisted between their daughter and Mr. Dacre, previous to his being asked for his consent to the marriage. Lord Kendal's return had been delayed a few days longer than she expected; and Lady Kendal had sometimes thought of communicating by letter all she wished to impart: but the uncertainty of Lord Kendal's temper determined her to await his arrival. She knew how much depended with him on the choice of a good opportunity for communicating any intelligence, and she could not tell in what mood he might be when the letter was to be read.

Dacre was aware of Lord Kendal's absence, and he was also aware that when once the declaration was made, which now hovered on his lips, he should have deprived himself of the society of Lady Emily till the sanction of her father had been asked and obtained. He resolved, therefore to restrain the expression of his hopes and feelings till Lord Kendal's return, and thus spare himself the unnecessary pain of a separation of days instead of hours, from her whose every look and word were now treasured with increasing fondness.

Perhaps there were moments when Dacre found some difficulty in the practice of this self-control, but yet he scarcely wished it otherwise; for the tacit encouragement he had received from Lady Kendal, by thus allowing him the constant enjoyment of Lady Emily's society, had lulled all his former fears of opposition from her parents. He knew that in their consent the happiness of Emily must now be as deeply involved as his own. Of late she had often spoken of the almost more than parental kindness



with which she had been treated from her infancy by her father and mother. He thought himself sure of the future ; and thus, whilst he stationed himself evening after evening by her side, he forbid the intrusion of gloomy apprehensions to darken the sunshine of his present enjoyment. It is true that his happiness was based rather on hope than on certainty ; but yet whilst in her presence it seemed so complete, that he scarcely dared wish for a change.

The nearer we approach the object we desire, the more must we dread lest, in attempting to place this fabric of bliss upon surer foundations, it should crumble away at our touch like the fairy forests of the white hoar frost. Like the traveller on the mountains, we gaze with breathless delight on the prospect before us, but dare not give utterance to the feelings it inspires. A sound may release the fierce avalanche from its bondage, and the word that is spoken lay waste all which he views with such hope and rapture.

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## CHAPTER II.

There is such confusion in my powers,  
 As after some oration fairly spoke  
 By a beloved prince, there doth appear  
 Among the buzzing pleased multitude,  
 Where every something, being blent together,  
 Turn to a wild of nothing, save of joy,  
 Expressed and not expressed.

*Merchant of Venice.*

“WHERE is Lord Kendal?” was the Duchess of Bolton’s first question, as Lady Kendal and her daughter arrived to dinner at Bolton House.

Lady Kendal, as desired, made his excuses. He had been standing a good deal before he set out in the morning ;

he had caught a slight cold, and preferred not again leaving his own fireside that evening, and hoped therefore that the duchess would not be angry with him for breaking his engagement.

Dacre was present, and learnt from this little dialogue that Lord Kendal was returned. The preference evinced by Lady Emily and Dacre for each other's society had been of late sufficiently marked to secure for him a place by her side at dinner.

"I hope, Lady Emily," said he, "you continue to like Mrs. Harry Molesworth?"

"The more I see of her the better I like her," replied Emily with great warmth, "and mamma is equally pleased with her: she and Captain Molesworth are coming here this evening."

Dacre was glad to hear it, and said, "I assure you Mrs. Molesworth is most sensible of the kindness she has met with from both Lady Kendal and yourself."

"We cannot lay claim, I fear, to any merit on that score," replied Lady Emily, "for we have only been pleasing ourselves in seeking her society."

"That may be very true," rejoined Dacre; "but you know that kindness, like most other things, is valued rather by the pleasure it gives than the pain it costs."

"I hope, then," replied Emily, "that I may infer from that, that the liking is mutual."

"Do you think, Lady Emily," said Dacre, lowering his voice, "that any liking of yours could fail to be mutual? Experience must surely have taught you the value that is set upon your approbation and regard."

Emily blushed, and denied all knowledge of the value of her good opinion.

"You must remember," said Dacre, "that it is those who value it most who dare least give expression to their feelings, unless," continued he, speaking still lower, and in a tone that could not be misunderstood,—"unless you give them permission to speak."

Emily could scarcely conceal her emotion: she dreaded the possibility of any explanation at a moment when to betray her agitation would have been most distressing, and its concealment impossible. Scarcely knowing what to say, she remained silent; but Dacre repeated the question

by saying, "Does silence give consent to speak, Lady Emily?"

Emily breathed quicker and quicker as she hastily replied, "You cannot suppose that I give audience to the praises of myself when in company."

Emily felt grateful to the servants who interposed wines and entrées in quick succession between Dacre and herself, and thus assisted her wish to cut short the thread of a subject on which she dared not continue; but Dacre had understood her meaning, and restored her composure by the change he now made for the rest of the dinner, in his manner of addressing her, and his topics of conversation.

The ladies had not long retired to the drawing-room, when Lady Kendal announced to the duchess her intention of leaving her early.

"I will send the carriage later for Emily," said she; "but as Lord Kendal is at home, and alone, I think I had better go home."

The duchess begged that Emily might not be sent for very early, as she wished her to play and sing that evening.

Lady Kendal said she was in no hurry for her to return; and took leave of the party.

"Now," thought she, as she stepped into her carriage, "I shall have an excellent opportunity of talking to Lord Kendal about Emily and Mr. Dacre."

Captain and Mrs. Molesworth, and a few others, came in the evening; and, amongst the number, were two or three old friends of the duke's, who were particularly fond of music, and for whose sake the duchess had been anxious to detain her cousin. Mary and Emily sang together: the company were delighted; and song after song was called for, and Lady Emily was complimented on her good nature in singing all she was asked to sing, whilst she was more than rewarded for the effort by the look of delight with which Dacre listened to every note.

Most of the company had departed, when one of the remaining guests naming an English ballad asked Lady Emily if she knew it, and would sing it. It was the very song which Dacre had asked for in vain at Denham, and which she had then promised him to perform at some

future period. She turned involuntarily towards him as the ballad was named: their eyes met, and Emily bent her head over the music book to conceal her blushes; but Dacre saw her embarrassment, and in an audible tone he seconded the request that they might hear it.

Emily had now no fear of being overcome by the words of that song. They embodied no longer the feelings of her mind. They told of unrequited love, and blighted hopes; and she was conscious that miseries such as these had ceased to strike upon a sympathetic chord.

The song was over. It was supposed by the guests that Lady Emily must be tired; and on her quitting the piano-forte some departed, and others returned to the room in which the duke was sitting, to join in conversation with him. None were now left in the music room but the Molesworths, Lady Emily, Dacre, and the duchess. The room was large; and as Dacre approached Lady Emily, the duchess took the opportunity of showing the Molesworths some prints of such views of foreign countries as she had heard Captain Molesworth say that evening he had visited in the course of his many voyages. His attention was secured by the interrogatories of the duchess concerning the accuracy of the views at which they were looking; whilst Mary was wholly engrossed in studying every spot which Harry had seen, and listening to every word of description he gave.

Dacre saw they were occupied; and turning to Lady Emily, he offered to assist her in arranging her music. Then, approaching still nearer, he said in a low voice, "I was glad to hear that song to-night: it paints so well what I have too often felt!"

"I know it is a favourite of yours," she replied; and the music trembled in her hands as she spoke.

"Do you remember," continued Dacre, "that you promised me at Denham, I should hear it in London?"

Emily tried to smile, as she remarked, that she had been true to her word.

"You have," replied Dacre; "and I also have been true to mine."

He paused for a moment: Emily looked intently on the sheet of blank paper before her, and pressed her arms

against the piano-forte to conceal the excessive trembling of her limbs. Dacre perceived her emotion, and pointing to the group at the other end of the room, he said with a smile,—

“We are not in company now, Lady Emily.” Then placing his hand upon hers, he said in a low and agitated voice, “I told you that I should not go abroad till I had once more heard that song.” He stopped, drew a long breath, and then said, “Now that I have heard it, must I go?” He pressed her hand as he spoke—she did not withdraw it:—“Speak! oh speak!” murmured he, in a scarcely audible voice. “Emily! say but a word, and I shall understand you.” Her agitation almost stifled her words, but his quickened hearing caught the sounds she uttered; and as the blessed words, “Then stay,” fell upon his ear, he felt the pressure of his hand returned.

The explanation that followed need not be repeated—a few minutes had brought to light the secret of their hearts; but whilst Emily avowed his dominion over her happiness, she reminded him that upon her parent’s consent must, of course, depend the fulfilment of their hopes. How early might he call upon Lord Kendal, was the question. Emily mentioned the hour at which her father was usually at home.

The carriage for Lady Emily had been announced. The Molesworths had risen to depart.

“Dacre, shall we set you down?” said Harry, as he saw that he had parted from Lady Emily.

The offer was accepted, and as they got into the carriage, Harry whispered in his ear, “May I ask you one question—are you happy?”

“Not quite yet,” replied Dacre; and as the light of the lamp displayed the smile with which he said so, Harry had not a moment’s doubt that he was an accepted lover. “I must say nothing to night,” continued he: “early to-morrow, I call on Lord Kendal.”

Harry understood this obligation to be silent, and forbore making any further allusion to the subject, than that of begging he would let him know as soon as he returned from his visit on the morrow.

As Dacre and the Molesworths quitted the room, the

duchess made Emily a sign to follow her to the boudoir that adjoined the room in which they were standing. Emily obeyed the sign.

The duchess read at once in her countenance the tale to be told, and tenderly embracing her; said, "Emily! have I not been a true prophetess?"

Emily threw her arms round her cousin, and with tears in her eyes, exclaimed, "You have indeed been right! how can I forgive myself for having even for a moment doubted his sincerity?"

"That I cannot say," replied the duchess, smiling; "but if you cannot forgive yourself, depend upon it he will readily forgive you. In fact, at times, appearances were very much against him; and before I forgive him, I shall expect some excellent reasons for his having so tormented my own dear little cousin."

Emily was sure that she alone was in fault from beginning to end; and if the duchess had suggested a doubt of his having far surpassed the limits of human perfectibility, Emily would, for once in her life, have been seriously angry even with her. No doubt was entertained of the approbation of her parents, and Emily bid her good-night with the promise of despatching a note as soon as the interview between Dacre and Lord Kendal was over.

Lady Emily had hoped that her mother might not be gone to bed when she reached home, for her measurement of time had been very inaccurate at Bolton House. It was, however, long since Lord and Lady Kendal had retired to rest; and Emily found, to her surprise, that it was nearly two hours later than she had imagined. It was long before she could sufficiently compose herself even to prepare for the rest she now needed, and she sat and mused for a while on the strange eventful evening she had passed. A few short words had changed doubt into certainty; and the long-cherished hope had been realized. A few short words had at once thrown over the barriers of reserve, which habit, education, and delicacy had erected, and drawn from her lips the confession of those feelings, which, under any other circumstances, she would most scrupulously have concealed. It seemed as if so little had been said! She had even almost a difficulty in recalling what had actually passed, and yet the fate of her life had been

decided. It seemed too like a dream, and she longed for the morrow, when again they should meet. *Then*, she might hope to enjoy her happiness—*now*, it was too new—too overpowering for enjoyment. She had a feverish impatience to impart all her feelings to her mother, and yet to embody those feelings in words would have been difficult.

The extremes of joy and grief but too closely resemble each other in their first effects upon our frame, and Emily felt relief in tears to her over-excited mind. Then came that feeling of deep gratefulness, with the humble sense of her own unworthiness, which attends the consciousness of real blessings. She had often prayed, not presumptuously or lightly, for the earthly objects she desired—but humbly and fervently, that she might be so ordered in this life, as would best fit her for the purer joys of heaven. She thought her prayer was heard in thus committing her to the care and protection of this first object of her earthly love; and falling on her knees in pious gratitude for the happiness that awaited her, she prayed that thankfulness in prosperity, and resignation in adversity might never forsake her.

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### CHAPTER III.

Let's take the instant by the forward top,  
For we are old, and on our quick'st decrees  
The inaudible and noiseless foot of time  
Steals ere we can effect them.

*All's Well that Ends Well.*

DAYLIGHT had peeped through the shutters before Emily closed her eyes, and it was later than usual the following morning when she entered her mother's dressing-room, and communicated all that had passed on the preceding evening at Bolton House.

"Mr. Dacre will be here in an hour," said Emily, "to see papa; I told him he was generally at home at that time."

Lady Kendal turned pale for a moment. "Then, my dear," she replied, "I must instantly write him a note, to beg he will not come till the evening; your father is already gone out on business this morning." Emily was sorry; sorry for herself, and still more sorry for Dacre, who she well knew would be vexed at even the delay of a few hours."

"I suppose," said Emily, "that papa will not be much surprised by Mr. Dacre's visit; for he must know from you, mamma, how probable it was."

"No! indeed, my love," replied Lady Kendal, with some little nervousness; "I fear it will come as a complete surprise to Lord Kendal, and that is the only thing which at this moment diminishes my happiness at all you have told me." Emily looked surprised. Lady Kendal continued:

"You know that nothing worries your father more than hearing of what he calls 'nonsensical flirtations,' and so I had avoided speaking to him of Mr. Dacre till we came to London; then he has been out of town, and those matters are better told in conversation; and, last night, when I had meant to tell him everything I knew and thought upon the subject, he seemed so tired, and was not quite well, that I deferred it till this morning; and this morning he went out before I was dressed, and we only met for a moment. He said he should be at home by four o'clock this afternoon. I shall then have plenty of time to talk to him before dinner, and I will write instantly to Mr. Dacre, to beg he will not come till the evening."

"He will, I know, be very much disappointed at being put off," said Emily; "so mind," added she, kissing her mother, "that your note is *very* kind." Lady Kendal smiled, and wrote the note, and then began to frame in her mind the best mode of announcing to Lord Kendal the intelligence that awaited his return.

Lord and Lady Kendal were sincerely attached to each other; but, unfortunately, one essential requisite for happiness was wanting to Lady Kendal—she was never perfectly at ease with her husband. He was irritable, she



was timid; and, too early in married life, she found herself obliged to study the mood in which a communication was likely to be received, and to measure her words, and to choose her opportunity.

How often is the happiness of married life destroyed by the weak indulgence of a captious temper. How often may the confidence of those who have no thought but for each other be shaken, by this uncertainty in the effect produced by their communications. How completely is the mutual ease, the unrestrained openness, the happy feeling of equality destroyed, when the curl on the lip and the frown on the brow must be watched, and the tone of the voice must be listened to, ere the subject in question can with safety be broached. When once the thought that *now* is not the fitting opportunity has crossed the mind of either party, and when the delay is felt more as a reprieve than a privation, then may both be sure that for the questionable pleasure of indulged irritability, one of the blessings of matrimony has been forfeited. They are at once deprived of the comfort of that quick and open interchange of thought and feeling which should most exist in wedded life.

Lady Kendal sympathized most affectionately in the feelings of her child; her confidence in the character of Dacre was restored. She felt strongly the relief to her mind of having nothing further to dread for the happiness of her daughter; but all comfort in these reflections was suspended by the state of nervous anxiety with which she awaited Lord Kendal's return. She knew that in whatever state of mind and spirits he might enter the house, he must equally be informed, without delay, of all that concerned her daughter and Mr. Dacre. She dreaded his displeasure at her having kept him in ignorance on the subject; and though she knew, by experience, that the displeasure would not be lasting, yet she shrunk from the thoughts of the peevish expression and the petulant tone with which his answers and interrogatories were too sure to be accompanied when displeased. She gave orders that no visitors should be admitted; and then, in fancy, sketched the conversation that would take place between herself and her husband, and rehearsed, again and again,

the words in which she would begin the intended communication.

A knock at the door was heard. No sound of a carriage had preceded that knock; the house door was opened, and in another minute footsteps were heard on the stairs. "Here comes Lord Kendal," said she to herself; "I am so glad he has come home so much earlier than he intended this morning!" and she turned pale at the thoughts of his entrance. But the footsteps passed the drawing-room door, and she rang the bell to inquire if Lord Kendal was come home.

"No, my lady," was the answer; "the Duchess of Bolton desired me to say that she was with Lady Emily, and to ask if your ladyship would see her Grace this morning."

"Oh, yes!" replied Lady Kendal; "I will go into Lady Emily's room;" Lady Kendal drew a longer breath, and the blood mounted to her face, and she felt relieved on finding that the person she loved best on earth was not yet in the house. How strange the influence of fear! How strange that indefinite dread of imaginary dangers, which has power to upset the balance of mind and body, and to render both, through the medium of nerves, the mere slaves of our fancy!

The duchess had waited at home till two o'clock, in the expectation of receiving from Emily the promised report of Dacre's interview with Lord Kendal. Receiving none, however, she became impatient, and had walked from Bolton House, to ascertain, as she told Emily, "whether she had been so ungrateful as to forget her confidante in the last scene of the melodrama." Lady Kendal joined her niece and daughter, and they talked together cheerfully; and Lady Kendal forgot, till the clock struck three, that the time was approaching for the dreaded conversation with Lord Kendal. The duchess took her departure with the promise of calling again on her way home from dinner late in the evening.

The clock struck four, and Lady Kendal actually started. Lord Kendal had said he should be at home at that hour; and she as much expected to see him enter the room to the chimes of the clock, as if he had been a ghost, and the

hour of twelve ! He did not appear, and that was not very wonderful, as none but ghosts are obliged to keep time to a moment. Moreover, he had made no appointment at home, and Lady Kendal felt how foolish it was to have expected him to be punctual. At half-past four, Emily peeped in, to see if her father was there.

"Not yet," said Lady Kendal ; "but as you are not to be present when your papa and I talk it all over first, you had better go to your room, and I will tell you the instant we have done. Hark ! there is the bell ! Run away, dear ! I am sure that is he !"

Emily did run, and looked out of her window to see if her father was at the door—and saw a footman leaving cards !

Five o'clock came. Lady Kendal rung the bell, and asked if "my lord" was at home, and desired she might be told as soon as he returned. She tore up papers already condemned ; threw them into the fire, and then walked about the room ; she could settle to nothing. The half-hour struck, and she began to think he must have been detained. Six o'clock came, and now she was sure he would soon be at home ; for he had ordered dinner at half-past six. The minute hand had reached the quarter, and Lady Kendal felt a little angry. He had made a point of dining earlier than she liked—had insisted on greater punctuality—and had told Lady Kendal that she encouraged unpunctuality by never being in time ; "and then to be too late himself, is so provoking," thought she ; and for a moment felt herself almost a victim.

Half-past six came. Emily entered, dressed for dinner. She thought she had heard her father's step some time before. She fancied she had heard her mother go to his dressing-room—thought they were at that moment discussing all that filled her heart or mind ; and was not a little surprised and disappointed to find Lady Kendal standing at the window in her morning attire.

"It is very odd your father is not come home," said Lady Kendal. "I don't know what to do about dinner : he desired it might be on the table at half-past six.

"The dinner is quite ready, my lady," said the servant, who had just entered. "The cook wishes to know if it is to be sent up before my lord comes home."

Lady Kendal said, "No:" it was to be kept in readiness for his return. "I wish Lord Kendal would have been in time to-day," said she to Emily, as the servant closed the door. "One feels they must think us so capricious, not to be punctual, after all your father said upon the subject this morning."

Seven o'clock struck. Lady Kendal and Emily began to feel uneasy, and to say to each other that nothing was likely to have happened, and that there was no cause for alarm, (a sure sign that the alarm is, in fact, already taken.)

"How did papa go out, this morning?" inquired Emily.

"On horseback, I believe," was the reply.

"Then had we not better send to the stables to know if the horses had returned?"

They did so: and the servant brought word back, that the groom and horses had been at home ever since half-past three: that his lordship had said that it was cold, and that he should therefore walk; and had given no further orders to the groom.

It was now near eight. All thoughts of dinner were over. Both mother and daughter grew every minute more anxious and uneasy. The servant was sent once more to the groom, to ask where he had left Lord Kendal; and that information obtained, it was determined that two men on horseback should be despatched, in different directions, to make inquiries at every place at which it was probable he might have visited. It was a relief to think of anything to be done. It cheated time of that prolonged existence of each minute, and for the moment it almost soothed the anxious watchers into the belief that they had hastened the event for which they watched.

It was probable that from whatever cause Lord Kendal had been detained, he would not now return on foot. The sound of each approaching vehicle gave rise to feverish hope. Their lips were parched; their tongues seemed to cleave to the roofs of their mouths, as they listened in speechless anxiety to the noise of every passing carriage. More than once the sound appeared to be fast approaching their door, and the mother and the daughter involuntarily turned their eyes towards each other, till the deception

was over—the rumble of the wheels had faded gradually on the ear; and then the sickness of disappointment succeeded the quick beat of expectation that had excited them for an instant before. The return of the grooms was awaited with increasing impatience; for the agony of suspense was becoming each minute more intolerable. A word of real information might break the chain of frightful shapeless terrors, which imagination had raised. Not the well in the desert is more wanted to slake the thirst of the traveller, than that which can soothe for a moment the torture of doubt. Like the air that is supplied to those who have gone to the depths below, comes the word of information to relieve the fearful tension of suspense, and save the sufferer from his bursting agony.

Lady Kendal and Emily listened in vain for the sound of the horsemen's return. The grooms were still pursuing their unsuccessful search in quest of their master. Again the sound of wheels was heard; but they had listened to that sound so often in vain, that they tried not to heed the noise. For a time it seemed scarcely to approach; but still it continued: other carriages passed by at the rapid pace of pleasure or of business, and, for a moment, interrupted this slow advancing sound: but nearer and nearer it drew; and they could no longer withhold their attention from the direction from whence it came. It was within a few doors of the house, and as it still approached, they held their breath; the impulse was involuntary, for they had done so often before on that evening, and they expected but the same disappointing result. It now was close to the door: they listened for its continuance, but the sound had stopped. They looked at each other, and at that instant the bell was rung. Lady Kendal grasped her daughter's hand: the band of terror seemed tightly to bind their heads—their eyes were fixed, as though they looked for certainty in the vacant air—motionless, and pale as death, they sat for an instant to catch the sound that followed. The steps of the carriage were let down—foot-steps were heard on the stairs. Emily would have sprung from her seat, but her mother's hand was locked in hers,—and with Lady Kendal the power of motion seemed suspended. A commotion was heard in the hall: Lady

Kendal clung tighter to her daughter. The door opened, and a stranger entered.

"Tell me——" said Lady Kendal,—she was almost stifled, and she could not speak. The stranger approached.

"For God's sake tell me, sir, if you know anything of my father?" exclaimed Emily, in a tone that showed how deep was their alarm.

"I am come for that purpose," replied the stranger: "but," added he, in a voice of kindness, "ladies, I entreat you to be composed." Oh, what a knell of grief does that entreaty ring upon the ear of those, who once have known affliction!

"Tell me the worst!" said Lady Kendal, in the hurried tone of desperation.

The stranger hesitated, and looked at Lady Emily to see if he might proceed in safety.

"Where is he?" exclaimed Lady Kendal, in a louder voice; and her eyes seemed to start from her head as she glared on the stranger.

"Lord Kendal is in the house," replied he, in a soothing voice: "he is still alive."

Lady Kendal fell upon her daughter's neck: she gave one loud hysterical sob, and tears came to her relief. "Thank God, he is safe!" at length burst from her lips. She had been unconscious of the accent he had laid upon *still*. She had heard he was alive, and joy for a moment had blotted out fear. Emily had heard that accent,—had understood its sad meaning. She turned, imploringly, to the stranger, to explain its dreaded purport.

"Lord Kendal is *still alive*," repeated he, "and we hope he is safe; but I must not deceive you, madam," continued he, looking kindly on the wretched wife as he spoke: "Lord Kendal's state is precarious."

Lady Kendal looked on him wildly, as if she could not comprehend his meaning, and with a quick movement she rose from her seat, saying, "I must go to him: I cannot understand you."

"Excuse me," interposed he, "I will accompany you, this moment, to Lord Kendal; but I must warn you of the danger to his lordship from the slightest agitation."

Emily laid her hand on her mother to detain her. Lady

Kendal stopped. The stranger's warning made her feel the necessity of composing herself.

The stranger was a surgeon, and he now quickly informed them that Lord Kendal had been seized with a fit not far from where he resided, and that he had been sent for by the chemist, into whose shop he was taken ; that Lord Kendal had remained for hours in a state of insensibility, and that they could find no cards or letters by which he could be identified ; that, after being copiously bled, his consciousness and speech had sufficiently returned to enable him to give his name and address ; and, that, with the assistance of the chemist, they had then immediately brought him home at a foot's pace.

The surgeon particularly requested that the physician who usually attended Lord Kendal should be sent for directly, and he then descended with Lady Kendal and her daughter to the room in which he had begged the patient might be placed when lifted from the carriage.

Lord Kendal lay extended at full length on the sofa. A man was employed in bathing his head with some cold application : his eyes were closed ; his features seemed drawn, and he was apparently unconscious of all that was passing around him. He had been cupped on the neck, and the blood-stains on the neckcloth, tied loosely round the throat, added greatly to the ghastly effect of his appearance. Lady Kendal and Emily sickened at the sight, when first they entered the room ; and it was with difficulty that they sustained themselves from fainting. But they were now called upon to act, and all other feelings were forgotten. Lord Kendal was immediately carried up stairs to the quietest room in the house.

The physician was sent for, and the boy was instantly to be fetched from school.

## CHAPTER IV.

The ample proposition that hope makes  
 In all designs begun on earth below,  
 Fails in the promised largeness : checks and disasters  
 Grow in the veins of actions highest rear'd,  
 As knots by the conflux of meeting sap,  
 Infect the sound pine, and divert his grain,  
 Tortive and errant from his course of growth.

*Troilus and Cressida.*

It was not long after these arrangements had been completed, that Lady Emily was called out of the room. Her maid put a card into her hand, saying that the gentleman had insisted on its being taken to her ladyship, as he wished particularly to see her, if only for a minute. Emily desired he might be shown into the drawing-room ; then, returning to her mother, she gave the card, and told her she had consented to see him.

" You were right, my love," said Lady Kendal : " there is nothing more to be done for your father at this moment."

Emily descended to the drawing-room. Dacre was standing before the fire, his eyes fixed in reverie, his countenance pale and thoughtful. He started as Emily approached ; and eagerly seized the hand that was tendered to him. Emily tried to speak, but the sight of Dacre completely overcame her ; and, seating herself on the nearest sofa, she buried her face in her hands, burst into tears, and sobbed aloud.

Dacre could scarcely repress his rising emotion. He had looked upon his intended interview with Lord Kendal as a matter rather of form than of fear. He had come on a mission of hope and joy, and had found himself at once in the house of sorrow. He had pictured to his mind the smile, the blush, the sparkling eye, the joyous step, with which Emily would receive him that evening ; and he had



found death on the threshold of hope, and all sadness and gloom within.

"You are not angry with me, dearest, for having asked you to see me," said he, in a low and soothing tone, as he placed himself by her side, and gently took her hand.

"No, no," replied Emily, still weeping, "it was very kind of you—I wished to see you—but I cannot speak. Do you know——"

"Yes, yes, I know all," interrupted he; "you shall not pain yourself by telling me what I can learn from others."

"I did not see him this morning," continued she: "only this morning, he was well and strong; and now——" she shuddered. "Oh, Mr. Dacre, he has been such a father!" and again her tears flowed fast, and choked her utterance.

"But there may yet be hope," said he, endeavouring to soothe her agitation.

"There may—God grant there may be! but I have none."

"But why, dearest Emily, should you yet despair?"

"Because," said she, speaking almost in a whisper, "I heard the surgeon say that there was no hope. He did not know I was in the room. Poor mamma! she was spared that blow; but she too must soon know it——My dear, dear father!" again burst from her lips, and she sobbed till she became almost hysterical.

"For heaven's sake, calm yourself, my own beloved Emily!" said Dacre.

Emily made an effort to do so; and she pressed the hand in which her own was held. She looked at him. The tears were in her lover's eyes. She checked her own, and in a low subdued voice said, "I will be calm, I will try to be resigned—forgive me that I have so distressed you!"

"Forgive you!" exclaimed he; "can you think that your sorrow is not mine? Are not our hearts already one? Surely, Emily, you have not, even in your distress, forgotten all that passed last evening?"

"Oh, no!" replied she, "I remembered it too well; and when I thought of your happiness then, and saw how

wretched I had made you now, I feared that grief had already made me selfish. But I must not stay," added she, rising from her seat: "I cannot bear to be absent from his room."

"Go, then, dearest!" said Dacre, looking tenderly at her: "I must not detain you. It was not alone the selfish pleasure of seeing you that made me urge my admittance, but to implore of you to take care of yourself."

Emily assured him that her strength was not likely to fail.

Dacre shook his head. "You know not yet," he said, "how thin the sword can wear the scabbard. Emily, dearest Emily! I conjure you to take care of your health in this dreadful trial. Remember that I ask it for the sake of all who know and love you, for your family, for your mother, and for me!—yes, Emily! you have given me the right to say—for *my* sake take care of yourself."

Emily acknowledged that right, and thanked him with a look more expressive than words, for his anxiety on her account. "It has done me good seeing you," said she: "I feel calmer now than when I first came down—I hope more equal to the trial that awaits us."

"God bless you for these words," said Dacre, as he pressed her hand to his lips.

"Good night!" said she, her eyes again swimming with tears; "pray for me, pray for us—we shall need support from Him who alone can give it."

Dacre could not speak. They parted; and as he brushed away the tear that dimmed his sight, he gazed on her once more as she quitted the room. "Yes," thought he to himself, "heaven will preserve and support her in this her affliction. Surely heaven will protect angels such as she, who are sent to purify our hearts, and lift our thoughts on high in gratitude and praise to their Creator."

Emily returned to her father's room. Her mother was seated by the bed. A slight change had taken place during her short absence. Lord Kendal had shown signs of life, and a low moaning, and an occasional movement of the head, dispelled, for a time, that fearful semblance to a corpse which he had hitherto borne. Towards morning he slept, and they feared a stupor; but no, the sleep was tranquil, he breathed more freely, and the wife and child

sat silent and motionless by his side ; whilst the hope that had withered a few hours back, now budded again into life. On waking, he for the first time opened his eyes, turned them towards those who were nearest, and a faint smile of recognition passed over his countenance as he looked at Lady Kendal and Emily. They stooped to kiss him, and again he slept. This return of consciousness overcame the seeming calmness with which they had for some hours forced themselves to watch the sufferer. It was too like the return from death to life to be witnessed with composure, and they withdrew for a moment to mingle tears of hope revived, which could no longer be restrained.

The physician saw their error, and soon followed them to the room into which they had retired. It is vain and unjust to suppose that the habits of professional life must necessarily deaden the feelings of humanity ; and as Lady Kendal turned to him as if beseeching he would confirm their hope, he saw, with bitter regret, that on him had fallen the physician's hardest task. How sad an office to plunge the dagger where he would have healed the wound ! but he must now destroy the hope he would have given—the hope he would have cherished—the hope he would have realized. He must extinguish the light that had broken in upon their gloom, lest the treacherous beacon should lure them to a height from which the fall must greatly increase the danger to themselves.

“ Whatever may be our opinion,” said he, “ whilst there is life, we must act as if there were hope. We shall leave nothing untried :” and they repaired to the patient's room, to await the first opportunity of administering some fresh remedy.

It was soon after Dacre had left the house, on the preceding evening, that the Duchess of Bolton had called, according to her promise in the morning, and it was not till late at night that Lady Kendal persuaded her to return home. At Bolton House she found Dacre awaiting her arrival. He had determined to inform her of the grounds on which he placed his right to be now treated in some degree as one of the family ; but he found she was already informed of all he had to tell, and that in her he might look for a friend who could sympathize in the feelings of pain-

ful anxiety to which the state of poor Lord Kendal had given rise in himself. The duchess promised to forward to him the early bulletin that she was herself to receive. She did so, and at the same time proposed that he should accompany her to Lord Kendal's house, and await his opportunity of seeing Emily or Lady Kendal.

The duchess was summoned up stairs immediately on their arrival, in order that she might be told every symptom that had occurred since they had parted at night; and Dacre was left alone in the drawing-room. He had not been there long when Lady Kendal entered. She had come in quest of something she had left there the preceding evening, and was not aware that Dacre was in the house. She started on seeing him; then approached, shook him kindly by the hand, and would have spoken, but her emotion was too great. They had not met since his explanation with Emily—since she had known he was the accepted lover of her daughter; and the sight of him greatly affected her.

"Forgive me," said Dacre, "for having startled you: but, dear Lady Kendal, do not look upon me now as an intruder."

"I do not," replied Lady Kendal, in a voice scarcely audible; "and I am glad you came."

For a moment she paused, as if endeavouring to command her agitation; then seizing his hand, she said in a low and hurried tone, "She will be yours, Mr. Dacre!—you will be her protector: you must supply—"

She could not go on. She pressed his hand affectionately, and quitted the room.

During the day no material change took place in Lord Kendal's state. Towards the evening he again opened his eyes. He looked at all who surrounded his bed: he saw amongst them strange faces: he saw on all the stamp of sorrow and anxiety. Again he closed his eyes for a few minutes, then making a sign to the physician to approach him; he whispered a few words into his ear. The physician did not answer, and again Lord Kendal remained tranquil and silent. A tear stole gently down his cheek. He looked at Lady Kendal—then at Emily, and in a feeble voice said, "Henry." They understood his meaning; and his son, a boy of about twelve years of age, was brought

to his bed-side. He motioned to them to approach still nearer.

"Louisa!" said he, addressing his wife, "I do not suffer, but I know I am dying."

Lady Kendal pressed her lips to his. He returned the kiss.

"I fear," continued he, "that I have sometimes vexed you; but tell me, love, that all is forgiven, and I shall die happier."

Lady Kendal would have suppressed her bursting agony of grief, as she endeavoured to reply; but the sobs of her boy now broke upon her ear; and the feelings of the mother and the wife completely overpowered her, and she buried her face in the pillow.

"Try to be composed, dearest!" said the dying man, as the tears in quick succession now chased each other down his sunken cheeks. "My children, you must support your mother." Emily and Henry knelt by his side. "Emily! you will probably marry; and may you be as blessed, as a wife, as you deserve. You have both been dear children to me!" Emily kissed her father. "Harry! you will now have but one parent; you must give to your mother the affection and attention you would have given us both." He was bathed in the tears of his children—they buried their faces in his. His voice grew weaker. "God bless you all!" said he, after a pause. "Pray for your father—pray for me, Louisa—I will pray for you all—I will pray for myself." He raised his eyes, moved his lips in prayer: they tried to catch the sounds he uttered—they heard him say, "Thy will be done," and all was still; his lips parted, but he never spoke again. For a moment that stillness was broken; the frightful rattling in the throat, which announced the moment of dissolution, told the mourners that death was at hand; and then a short convulsive struggle, and all was over. His spirit had fled, and Lady Kendal and Emily were carried senseless from the room.

## CHAPTER V.

All things that are ordained festival  
 Turn from their office to black funeral :  
 Our instruments to melancholy bells ;  
 Our wedding cheer to a sad burial feast ;  
 Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change ;  
 Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse,  
 And all things change them to the contrary.

*Romeo and Juliet.*

WHEN Emily returned to consciousness, she found that Dacre was seated by her side. His presence was a comfort, for he forbore to talk of comfort ; but she saw in his tender sympathy for her grief, the only earthly consolation that could be given at such a moment. Long as Dacre had loved her—loved her, as he had done, with all the constancy, the ardour, and the passion of his nature, he now felt that something was added to the intensity of his former affection. The love that is kindled in the bright hour of prosperity will glisten and dazzle, but it may blind by its light, or be too quickly consumed ; but the love that is kindled in the twilight of sorrow, will softly illumine our path through the shades of this life. Like the moonbeams that play upon the dark surface of the waters, will that flame shed its mild yet powerful influence : unchanged, serene, and pure, it will shine and cheer the hours of darkness, of sadness, and of gloom. Dacre had been attracted, enchanted, and enchained, by the beauty, the manner, the grace—the talents, the disposition, and the varied charms of the gay and brilliant Emily ; yet not all these combined had raised in his heart a love so pure and holy as that with which he now regarded the bereaved and weeping daughter of affliction.

The interview was short : perfect quiet was deemed absolutely necessary for Emily, and Dacre was not, therefore,

allowed to protract his stay. He parted with the promise of being again admitted the following day, and Emily consented to take the opiate which the physician considered almost indispensable, after all that she had undergone the last twenty-four hours. It proved, however, of little avail; for she had not closed her eyes, when she was again aroused by the entrance of her mother's maid. Lady Kendal had been taken ill with a feverish attack, and it was many hours before the fever had yielded sufficiently to the remedies for Emily again to leave her.

Dacre called at the appointed hour, but Emily was then asleep. The duchess saw him, and advised that he should call again later in the day. He did so; but the servant said he knew that Lady Emily was then engaged with Lady Kendal, and he determined therefore to come in the evening; but the physician had insisted that Emily, fatigued and exhausted in body and mind, should retire to bed, and had told the duchess that on no account must she be allowed to do anything that could produce additional excitement that day. The duchess explained this to Dacre when he called; and the idea that her health might possibly be endangered by the gratification of his own wish to see her, in some measure softened the bitterness of his disappointment. But still it was a disappointment; and, vexed and dispirited, he retired to his home to brood over the sad thoughts which arise from the sorrows and sufferings of those whom we love.

Lord Kendal's will was opened. He had appointed Lady Kendal and the Duke of Bolton guardians to his son. The family seat at Oakley Park was to be the residence of Lady Kendal till her son came of age. The house in London was to be hers for her life. Upon Emily all that had been settled upon younger children naturally devolved, and, in addition to that settlement, Lord Kendal had added a considerable sum of money. Emily might now therefore be considered an heiress. But never does the impuissance of wealth strike more forcibly upon the mind than in the hour of affliction; never does its nothingness appear so null as when the vanities it gives can no longer attract. It cannot procure the talents, the beauty, the charms, that we covet; it cannot secure the affections we prize; it cannot bring back the loved spirit that has fled. It can give us

neither the comfort of hope, nor the blessing of content; it cannot purchase innocence to the guilty, nor restore to the wretched the happiness that is lost. No! it is not in adversity that the pleasures of wealth can be tasted. The heart sickens at the sights and sounds of pomp and state. The spirit that is broken sinks from the distinctions which wealth can create. The golden fount yields no refreshment to the bleeding heart. The mourner seeks some purer stream to staunch the wound.

The duchess found on her return to Lady Kendal's the following morning that she was better—had had no return of fever, but still kept her bed. The duchess proceeded to Emily's room. In her the change was appalling. She acknowledged that she had not closed her eyes during the night: she seemed unwilling to speak, even to her cousin; and there was a look of fixed despair on her countenance which seriously alarmed the duchess. The physician was in Lady Kendal's room, and to him she imparted her fears, and begged he would give her his opinion. The physician saw no cause for real alarm as to her health, but he considered her present state one of reaction; and that the painful excitement in which she had passed the last few days would fully account for any degree of mental or bodily depression.

"When will you like to see him, dearest?" said the duchess, in a caressing manner, when they were again alone.

"See *whom*?" said Emily, in the same dull and apathetic tone in which she had spoken before.

The duchess took her hand. "You must know who I mean, dear Emily: when will you see Mr. Dacre?"

Emily did not reply: she turned her face away from her cousin. "I have promised to let him know," continued she, putting her arm round Emily's neck, "so, dear, you will tell me when he may come."

Emily's lip quivered,—her eyes filled with tears. "Why?—why do you ask me?" she exclaimed, in a voice of despair. Then pressing her hand to her forehead, she was for a while overpowered by the agony of her feelings; and then came that fearful laugh, which seems to mock the grief that made it feel. A thrill of horror ran through the



duchess. For a moment she was possessed by the frightful thought that reason had sank under the blow that had stricken her. But in time this dreadful agitation subsided; and, turning to the duchess, she said, in a voice and manner that more nearly resembled her own, "You shall leave me now, dear Caroline. I want rest and quiet. I shall be more composed soon."

The duchess folded her to her heart and quitted the room. "She will be better," thought she, "when Mr. Dacre has been with her: she is too nervous now to know what is best for herself, but his kindness and affection must and will soothe her."

No sooner had she closed the door than Emily fell on her knees, and long and fervently she prayed for support in this hour of trial.

The servants at Lady Kendal's had become sufficiently aware of Dacre's position in the family to offer no longer any doubts as to his admittance; and when next he came he was ushered into the drawing-room, there to await the result of Lady Emily being informed of his arrival. The habit, so common in large establishments, of transferring a message through the medium of various individuals, occasioned so much delay, that it never succeeded in reaching Emily's ear that Dacre was there. Dacre had waited long and impatiently, and he was beginning to think of ringing the bell to inquire, whether Lady Emily had been told he was come, when he heard a slight noise in the adjoining room. It sounded like a low moan, and he gently opened the door, to see who was there. Emily was seated at a table: she was resting on her arms, and her face was hidden with her hands. Writing materials were before her; but the convulsive sob that shook her frame must have rendered her incapable of using them.

Dacre paused for a moment. There is something so sacred in grief, that we fear to disturb its ebullitions. We fear to break in upon that luxury of woe, which seems all that is left to the mourner in the first hours of bereavement. We scarcely dare to sever the spell with which sorrow can bind, lest some dream of the past should rudely be dispelled, and the dreamer too soon awakened to the sense of his loss. Dacre hoped she would look up; but he hoped in vain. He determined to speak, and he called

her by her name in the gentlest voice, lest he should startle her by a sound. She heard her name, but mistook the direction from which it came. She looked aside as she started to her feet; and with an air of excitement that bordered on wildness she exclaimed, "Who calls?" she spoke as if in terror.

"Dearest Emily!" said Dacre, advancing a step into the room. There was now no mistake. The voice was recognized. She turned suddenly round. Dacre stood before her. She uttered a loud and piercing shriek, and fell senseless on the floor. Dacre sprang forward: he lifted her in his arms—placed her on the sofa—rang the bell violently for assistance, and then, in an agony of terror, he bent over the figure that lay in death-like stillness before him, and placed his hand upon her heart. The beat was faint, but still it beat; and he knew that life was not extinct.

The bell had been heard throughout the house. Languid and exhausted with the fatigue of getting up, Lady Kendal had just been placed on the sofa, when the alarm reached her ears of Emily's state. Maternal love gave vigour to her frame; for awhile the overwhelming misery of the widow was suspended by the anxiety of the mother, and she ran down the stairs, and flew to the side of her unconscious child, with all the elasticity of youth and health. The usual restoratives were instantly applied, but Emily moved not: her hair had been unfastened in her fall, and hung loosely on her shoulders; her cheeks were blanched; her eyes closed, and her hand dropped powerless at her side. She lay like a marble monument to youth and innocence—so still—so pure—so lovely. One only sign of life she gave; her breast was sometimes heaved by a convulsive sigh. It seemed as if the sign of sorrow had alone outlived the fatal stroke of death. Medical assistance was procured; but for hours she remained insensible. In answer to the necessary inquiries respecting the immediate cause of this attack, the physician was informed by Lady Kendal of her engagement with Mr. Dacre. It was evident he thought that his unexpected presence had been too much for her over-excited nerves; and he gave it as his positive opinion, that on no account must she see him, when first emerging from her present state.

Long had they watched in anxious fear, for some symptom

of returning consciousness, which the physician had assured them would in time return. At length, her eyes again opened. She saw her mother and the duchess by her side, and she looked calm ; but her eye soon kindled, her cheek flushed, and in the harsh, discordant tones of delirium she exclaimed, " Go !—You must go !—Francis, I will not be detained !—My father !"

A shrill cry burst from her lips as she uttered that word : she threw her arms wildly over her head, and sprung forwards, as if to free herself from the restraint of some imaginary hold. The delirium of fever was upon her. For a time her life was in danger ; but youth, and the natural strength of her constitution, overcame the attack. All excitement was over. She was weakened, but she was calm ; and Dacre was in the hourly hope of being allowed again to approach her without endangering her recovery.

It had been a painful aggravation to his anxiety to endure this complete separation. Dreadful as it sometimes is, and must be, to witness the sufferings of those we love, it is bliss, when compared to the far greater misery of being absent, and becoming thus a prey to the power of imagination. There are moments of comparative tranquillity to those who can watch ; but to those who can only reflect, there is none.

## CHAPTER VI.

Go, speak not to me; even now begone.  
 O, go not yet ! Even thus two friends condemn'd  
 Embrace and kiss, and take ten thousand leaves,  
 Loather a hundred times to part than die.  
 Yet now farewell; and farewell life with thee! ♣

*Henry VI. Part II.*

THE heartfelt sympathy of the Molesworths, and the extreme kindness of both the Duke and the Duchess of Bolton, supported Dacre, in some measure, through this trying ordeal; and he spent the greater part of his time at Bolton House, in order that he might be more constantly supplied with information respecting Emily's progress. The duchess's last report had been so favourable, that Dacre imparted to Harry Molesworth the joyful hope that within another twenty-four hours he should probably be again permitted to visit her. On that hope he slept,—with that hope he awoke,—with that hope he walked to Bolton House the next morning, but the duchess was already out. The duke said that Emily had begged she would come to her later than usual that day; and the duchess had therefore determined to go out earlier, in order to execute that mass of daily business which ladies always have to execute, before she went to Lady Kendal's. Dacre was too much occupied with the happy thought of being summoned by Emily, to do or think of aught besides; and he returned to his home, lest any note from either her or the duchess should be sent to him there.

It was not often that Dacre had to fight against the disposition to be over-sanguine; but this day he had. He knew that the intensity of the wish again to behold Emily was father to the expectation; but yet he did expect on that particular day that the longed-for summons would arrive. He could not help it, and at every knock at the door

he was irresistibly led to the window, by the belief that he should see a note delivered by some well-known servant. Again the knock was heard; and, in spite of his many previous disappointments, Dacre once more threw up the sash to see who was there.

"I was sure it was," said he to himself, as he shut down the window. He had seen a servant of Lady Kendal's at the door, and his cheek glowed with happiness, as he awaited the entrance of the long wished-for note. The note proved a letter. Dacre was surprised at its length; and as he glanced his eye hastily over the writing, he caught sight of some words, which made his heart sink within him: but he must be mistaken—the context would certainly explain—he would read it calmly—he was sure that the sight of Emily's hand could bode no ill; but yet the paper trembled as he held it, and read as follows:—

"I must no longer delay writing. The time is come when you will naturally expect that we should meet again. I have been ill—I believe dangerously ill; but I am now recovering, and it would be weakness in me, and cruelty towards you, any longer to conceal the truth from your knowledge. You know that the supposed cause of my sudden fainting, and succeeding illness, was the shock of seeing you unexpectedly. The supposition was right. It was, I know, the sight of you that overcame my senses—that I remember. I now see you standing in the doorway; and from that moment, to the time when I was told I had been ill, I remember nothing distinctly. You were the last image that dwelt that day upon my mind; and that vision of you will never be effaced. The supposition was right, that the sight of you overcome, for awhile, both reason and health; but they knew not the real cause. None but myself knew the cause. I have since told my mother—and now my head swims: I dare write no more at present."

The letter was continued the following morning.

"I left off last night, for I am still weak in body and in mind, and I could not continue. The effort of writing this letter is even greater than I expected. On the morning we last met, I had come down stairs for the purpose of then writing to you all I have now to say: my mind was overwrought; and the sight of you, whom I never

thought to see again, was too much for my distracted senses. Oh, Mr. Dacre! you must know how sincerely I have returned your affection. You do know with what devotion I have loved you. Yes! I have acknowledged my love, in that one hour of hope and happiness, and I will not retract its acknowledgment now, in my despair. We must never meet again! Francis! dearest Francis! forgive me the wretchedness I have brought upon you. Willingly would I have forfeited my life to spare you the pain of such a blow. But my resolution is fixed. Ask me not the reason. I have told you my love is unchanged. There is not a feeling in your heart towards me, which I do not return with twofold affection. Judge then by your heart of the extent of my sacrifice. Nothing can alter my determination. It is based on a principle dearer than life, dearer than all that could make life valuable.

"Write to me one line; tell me that you forgive me—tell me that you pity me—tell me that you will try to forget me—but do not try to alter my resolution. Do not seek to see me. The privacy of domestic affliction will spare me from the chances of again meeting for awhile; and should you remain in England we shall probably retire to the Continent: it is better for both that we should be far asunder. I implore of you to be resigned to the fate to which we are now condemned. Think of me with kindness, but not with love; and if, when time and change have deadened my image in your mind, some other happier love should again bring joy into your heart, remember that on me you will then have conferred the only happiness this world can give. To know that you have ceased to suffer can alone restore my peace. God bless and protect you. We must pray for each other in this hour of trial. I shall pray that my life and my strength may endure so long as I can be of comfort or use to my poor widowed mother. And for you, dearest Francis, night and morning will I pray for every blessing that life and immortality can bestow. Once more, God bless you."

"Farewell!" had been written below, but tears had blotted that sad word. Dacre dropped the letter from his hand: his head was dizzy: for a time he was stupified by this sudden and unexpected blow. But a few minutes

back he had gazed on his happiness as a substantial reality now within reach. He had looked again, and it was gone. It was not dimmed, removed, diminished, but—gone; gone without preparation, without noise, without aught to disturb the seeming security of its foundation. His happiness had been built on the strength of her affections: that strength was not diminished, and yet the superstructure had vanished. The fair fabric he had looked on with hope and delight had been engulfed in a moment: not a vestige was left of all he had raised; and, like the lost wanderer on the barren plain, he stood alone,—his beacon gone, his hopes defeated, and all around a dreary blank, without an object left to point his wishes, or to guide his steps.

There are events in life that seem too great, too sudden, too overwhelming, to be true. We cannot believe that the hopes, the joys, and the sorrows of life, can depend on the work of a minute. We measure by the hours, the days, and the years, that have been spent in their anticipation, enjoyment, or endurance. We look to the gradual realization of our hopes and wishes; we think our joys will be weakened by decay, ere they depart. We trust that time will wear away with its slow workings, the keenness of sorrow: but on these sudden revulsions of fate we are too much startled to believe them possible, and the first impression is to doubt the reality of the change that has been wrought.

Dacre placed the letter again before him: he looked at it; his eyes followed the words, but his understanding went not with them. He was stunned, he was petrified; and again he read it: his lips were parted, his mouth was parched, his eyes were unnaturally open, he was as cold as death, and yet his forehead felt on fire: it seemed as if life itself had flowed from every other part, to add vigour to the suffering of his mind. And again he read it: and now he dwelt upon each word of fondness, and a tear trickled unconsciously down his cheek. Yes! nature had her way, and Dacre wept. Oh, what a bitter grief is that, which wrings a tear from manhood in his prime! Man seldom weeps for man. He can see his comrades fall in battle: he can stanch, unmoved, the bleeding wound; he can follow to the grave, with a firm and steady step, the relative,

the friend who loved him with a brother's love. Perhaps it needs her softening influence to give power to the impressions that are made; perhaps he thinks how she would have wept for him, and shall he not, in return, weep for her suffering and sorrow? Shall not his footsteps tremble, where hers would have faltered? and will not he shed a tear on the grave where is laid the mother who nurtured, the sister who played, the wife who adored, or the bride who was pledged to him? Yes! for woman he weeps. The sternness of man is overcome by her gentleness, and their natures are thus assimilated by the sympathy that binds them.

Dacre felt that there was in Emily's letter a firmness of determination he could not hope to move: yet he would write to her; he would implore her to see him; he would beseech her to tell him the cause of this sudden resolution; he would appeal to her mother; he would appeal to the duchess; he would willingly endure any term of probation she pleased to inflict. He would ask it as a right, not thus to be condemned, unheard, to misery for life. Of what was he accused? what had he done? If any fault of his had brought upon himself this punishment, gladly would he endure the infliction of any penance she would name, would she but retract that dreadful sentence of eternal separation. Would she but hold out to him any hope of forgiveness, if he had offended; then would he endeavour to be reconciled to his present fate; then would he hope, by a life of love and devotion on his part to repay the mercy she had shown, in now revoking this cruel decree. She had said her heart was not changed, and how could he doubt her truth? And if her love was still unchanged, she could not—would not—let him plead in vain. It was thus he determined to write to her. In the evening he received the following answer:—

“ You have pained me more than I can describe. Why did you write as if I had the power, but not the will, to recant the purport of my letter this morning? I must again repeat, it is impossible: I cannot—I dare not: I have nearly paid the forfeit of my life to come to this resolution; I have done more—I have inflicted pain and disappointment on you; and can you suppose that, if to yield to persuasion were possible, I would voluntarily have endured



all this agony? Urge me not, dearest Mr. Dacre, I entreat of you; though my heart should break under this trial, I would not, must not, bend. I had never thought to address you again: it is but to lengthen the sufferings of both; and I wish to be regarded as one dead in your mind: but some expressions in your letter have induced me once more to write. You speak as if I had acted from some resentment towards you, as if you had been in error. Most solemnly I assure you, that such is not the case. No, dearest Francis, you could not offend me, and I could not resent even injury from *you*. Ask me not to explain. I implore of you, by the love you bear me, to seek no explanation. You have committed no fault: my heart is unchanged; but I repeat—we must never meet again. Forgive me! This is my last request; and now all is over. I will not write again. God bless and preserve you!"

Dacre had not long perused this final blow to every hope when footsteps were heard upon the stairs. It was so impossible at that hour in the evening that it should be a visitor, that he gave no attention to the sound; but in a minute his door was opened, and the Duke of Bolton entered.

"Dacre," said he, shaking him kindly by the hand, "I have forced myself in, but you must forgive me; I could not let the evening pass without seeing you."

Dacre thanked him, and thought by the duke's manner that he was aware of what had passed. He asked him if he knew all.

"I do," replied the duke. "The duchess has been with Emily this whole afternoon, and all that she has told her I know."

"The duchess, then, knows the cause of this sudden determination," said Dacre, eagerly.

"No," said the duke: "Caroline knows only the purport of the letter you received this morning. Emily has positively refused to tell, even her, the motives that have induced her to break off her engagement. Her mother alone knows: she approves; and Caroline, of course, has no right to interfere."

"Can it be Lady Kendal who has wrought all this misery?" said Dacre.

"No," rejoined the duke: "I know it is entirely

Emily's own doing. Her resolution was taken before she spoke to her mother on the subject. Broken-hearted as Lady Kendal is at the loss of her husband, Caroline says that this change in the prospects of her daughter has greatly added to her misery, and yet she approves."

"How incomprehensible!" exclaimed Dacre; "but may there not still be hope from the duchess's influence? She has already been so kind a friend to me, may I not hope that she will again exert herself in my behalf?"

"Could her exertions be of any avail, my dear friend, your success would be secured. There is nothing she would not do, nothing that we would not both do, not only to serve you, but to serve Emily. We dread the effects upon herself of her own resolution."

Dacre sighed, he could not speak.

"But, alas!" continued the duke, "at present nothing can be done. Emily has implored the duchess, not to speak to her on the subject. She says she can support herself better in silence; that at some distant period she will explain her conduct to Caroline, but not now."

Dacre was silent for a minute. "Then," said he at length, "there is no hope, even from the duchess's kindness."

"None, I fear," replied the duke: "no man can tell the events that time will bring; but at present I fear that we must consider this engagement at an end: it grieves me to say so; but there is no use in shrinking from the truth. Now," said he, after a short pause, "I must tell you that I have a favour to beg of you. To-morrow I go out of town for a short time to our villa—will you come with me? The duchess will follow in a few days. The Molesworths have promised to join us there: we shall, of course, have no other company."

Dacre felt this kindness deeply, and the offer was accepted. Nothing could be more soothing to him, under existing circumstances, than the kindness he received from those to whom Emily was dear. He felt that to the duchess, in particular, he could open his heart; and it was a relief to him to do so. Long and often did he talk over with her the possible cause of this unhappy change in his prospects; for she could sympathize in his feelings, though

she could not enlighten him as to the motives which had induced Emily to break off her engagement.

"Of the cause of this change I cannot even surmise," said the duchess one day, as she returned from a walk, during which no other subject had been discussed between Dacre and herself; "but of this I am sure, nothing will alter her determination. It must have sprung from some fixed principle of what is right: her mother approves; and I am persuaded that no power on earth will shake her. She has great firmness of character; and the motive that is sufficiently powerful to induce so dreadful a sacrifice of her happiness cannot and ought not to be changed by persuasion."

A few mornings afterwards the duke received a note from a friend, who announced his intention of going abroad for a short period, and at the same time expressed his regret that he had not been able to find any agreeable *compagnon de voyage*. Mr. Howard (for such was his name) was well known to Dacre. They had met at Denham; they were now well acquainted, and had felt a mutual pleasure in the society of each other. Of this the duke was aware; and before post-time that day he succeeded, with very little difficulty, in persuading Dacre to allow him to open a negotiation between him and Mr. Howard.

"I am sure," said the duke, "that it is better you should go abroad for a time. Howard is a sensible, well-informed man: he is not very gay, nor as young as yourself; but he will perhaps, for these reasons, be better suited to your present tone of feeling than some lively contemporary, whose spirits might, too probably, tend rather to depress than to raise your own."

Dacre felt the truth of these observations, and was well disposed to accompany Mr. Howard. He wished to go abroad, because he was wretched in England. He expected no pleasure, for he felt himself dead to amusement: but though unhappiness had made him restless, it had also made him indolent; and the duke was glad, therefore, to have had the opportunity of arranging for him some plan which should secure his putting into execution that which would be best for him under existing circumstances. The affair was soon arranged. Mr. Howard was delighted with the thoughts of having Dacre as a companion; and it was agreed that they should travel together at least as far as Geneva.

## CHAPTER VII.

Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes,  
And with a virtuous visor hide deep vice.

*Richard II.*

A FEW evenings before Dacre quitted the villa he entered into conversation with Harry Molesworth and his wife upon the subject of Mr. Wakefield; and he told them that he had requested Mr. Wakefield, during his last visit, to procure for him, if possible, a sight of the miniature. "It is almost childish in me to feel such an interest in that picture; for, after all, if I do see it again, it can only be food for curiosity: but still I have a desire to know if he has ever asked Mrs. Shepherd's leave to show it to me."

"Oh yes," replied Mary, "I am sure he has asked her leave. Don't you remember, Harry," continued she, addressing her husband, "that we could not understand my uncle's message to Mr. Dacre the other day?"

"Certainly I do," replied Harry; "and I have no doubt now it referred to the picture: but in truth," said he, turning to Dacre, "we were so persuaded, from the hurried and indistinct manner in which he spoke, that it was only a confusion of his, that we attached but little consequence to what he said."

"Can you remember," said Dacre, "what he did say?"

"Not precisely," replied Harry, "because I could only hear in part; but I remember that he said, 'I have done as your friend wished;' and then he glanced at Mrs. Shepherd to see if she was listening, and in a low voice he said, 'Tell him she is quite agreeable when he pleases.'" Dacre had hardly expected this willingness in Mrs. Shepherd to comply with his request, and he determined that, ere he left England, he would once more call upon Mr. Wakefield.

The time was now drawing near for his departure: some preparations were necessary to be made; and he left the

villa for a few days, with the promise of returning there so soon as his business was accomplished. He had inquired of the Molesworths at what hour he was most likely to find Mr. Wakefield at home; and at that hour he found himself at his door. Mr. Wakefield was at home; and Dacre was admitted. In coming up stairs, he thought he heard Mrs. Shepherd speaking in a loud and angry tone. On entering the room he found her standing near Mr. Wakefield, her face a good deal flushed, and a letter in her hand. She had evidently been displeased at something that had occurred; and Mr. Wakefield looked so unusually nervous, that Dacre could not help thinking that some altercation must have taken place between them. Mrs. Shepherd did not leave the room, and Dacre had no opportunity of asking Mr. Wakefield the question which he had, in fact, come on purpose to ask. Mr. Wakefield, however, followed him to the door, and in a low voice said, "Come at this hour to-morrow, my dear sir; I want to speak to you."

Dacre called the following day: Mrs. Shepherd was in the room again. She was reading the newspaper aloud as he entered. Her countenance presented a striking contrast to that which she had exhibited the day before; and her manner was more than usually bland and respectful to Mr. Wakefield. The old man seemed in high spirits. Mrs. Shepherd commented upon the fineness of the present day, and the unwholesomeness of the day before; quoted Dr. Davies's opinion that mild, damp weather always disagreed with Mr. Wakefield, "it made him so sadly nervous;" and Mr. Wakefield said himself he felt as young again to-day as he had done yesterday. It was quite evident that if any quarrel had disturbed their serenity then, that they were now enjoying the delights of entire reconciliation. Mrs. Shepherd soon left the room. Dacre thought the opportunity was not to be neglected; and immediately asked Mr. Wakefield if he had ever been able to make the request he had kindly undertaken to make on his behalf to Mrs. Shepherd.

"Indeed I did, Mr. Dacre; I never forget my promises. I assure you: though I am not quite so young as I was, I am not too old to remember what I have to do; and here

it is," said he, feeling for something in his pocket. Dacre looked eagerly for the miniature. "Here it is!" said he, deliberately unfolding a letter. He placed his spectacles on his nose. Dacre looked surprised. "That letter, you must know," said Mr. Wakefield, "is to Mrs. Shepherd. It is from her cousin; and a most unlucky business it is altogether, and has hurried my poor dear Mrs. Shepherd sadly. I will read it, my dear sir," continued he: "she wished you should see it; and the letter explains why you cannot see the picture." He then read the letter: it was as follows:—

"My dear Sarah,—In vain have I looked for the letter-case you describe as having left at my house. I hope you were mistaken in supposing you brought it with you when you and Mr. Wakefield were so good as to pay me a visit. I fear, from your great anxiety upon the subject, that it contained something of value. I have searched every where for it, and I will search again; but the horrible confusion in which everything has been thrown, by my sudden and unexpected loss, makes it difficult to find anything at present. I have determined on parting with my house and furniture: the latter is already packed up for sale; and then I must instantly go abroad, probably to America. Hoping you will soon find your lost letter-case, I remain your affectionate cousin."

"That's all," said Mr. Wakefield; "the name don't signify, as he is in trouble just now."

Dacre inquired if the lost case had contained Lieutenant Harrison's portrait.

"Indeed it did, my dear sir," replied Mr. Wakefield, "and Mrs. Shepherd has been fretting herself most sadly about it."

Dacre said the loss was indeed distressing.

"Ah, poor thing! she feels it very much: she always feels everything so much; and then this cousin has been very fortunate, and that vexes her too. He had bound himself security for a friend: his friend cannot pay, and he is as good as ruined, poor fellow! He was very civil and obliging to me, when I went to his house for a little change of air.

Dacre's thoughts dwelt only upon the loss of the miniature; but he felt that Mr. Wakefield expected him to

say something of the losses of Mrs. Shepherd's cousin, and therefore said he hoped time might bring his affairs round.

"Time, and a little assistance,—you know, Mr. Dacre, —a little assistance does more than even time," said he, with a significant laugh. "I had some difficulty in preventing Mrs. Shepherd from giving up every farthing she has in the world to assist her relation; but it was better, you know, to see what I could do myself, than to let her part with the very small sum she has been able to save."

Dacre was sure that if Mrs. Shepherd's cousin was a man of honour he would never have allowed her to make such a sacrifice.

"That is very true, Mr. Dacre; and I told her that he deserved to be punished for his imprudence. But the ladies will have their way, you know, sir; and as Mrs. Shepherd was determined to assist him herself, if I did not, why, it was better that I should try what I could do. We all have our troubles, as I say, Mr. Dacre, and we ought to help one another."

There was no denying this benevolent precept; and so, whatever might have been Dacre's secret thoughts respecting the sincerity of Mrs. Shepherd's wish to assist her cousin out of her *own* purse, he could, of course, do nothing but acquiesce in the truth of Mr. Wakefield's last sentiment, on the propriety of mutual assistance in distress. Dacre had informed Mr. Wakefield of his intention of going abroad; when, therefore, he arose to depart, Mr. Wakefield hoped he would be well amused in his tour—assured him all young men liked to travel abroad—warned him of the danger of forgetting his friends—advised him not to bring home a French wife—and bestowed upon him all such other good wishes and advice as his natural garrulity and good nature dictated.

It would have been difficult for Dacre to define very precisely what expectations he had hoped to realize by the wished-for sight of Lieutenant Harrison's portrait. He had certainly thought that another view of the picture would confirm him in the belief that it bore the strongest resemblance to his father. But then, what would he have gained? what would it prove? The resemblance might arise from the accidental likeness that sometimes exists be-

tween two people without relationship ; or it might be the coincidence of two painters fixing on the same attitude. Even had he been able to prove that it was actually the portrait of Major Dacre, to what further knowledge was that to lead ? Probably to none that he would have wished to acquire, and still more probably to none at all. It was thus that Dacre had often reasoned with himself about the miniature.

Nevertheless, he was disappointed in the extreme at the result of his farewell visit to Mr. Wakefield. He had fully expected that on that day he should see it ; and it seemed to his depressed and irritable mind another instance of that ill fate which had attended all his wishes. He felt as one condemned to be for ever guided by some delusive hope—a hope that should ever seem to be within his reach, and yet for ever elude his grasp. He returned to the villa, and faithfully reported to the Molesworths all that he had observed, and all that had passed at Mr. Wakefield's.

"Harry," said he, "I warn you again to beware of Mrs. Shepherd. I am more than ever convinced that I have not wronged her by my suspicion that she is not always what she seems. Had you but seen her countenance on the first of my last two visits you would have thought the same."

Harry and Mary thanked him, and promised to be on their guard. In truth, their favourable impression of her was somewhat shaken by all that Dacre had just reported. Dacre then begged that should any opportunity offer of obtaining information concerning the picture, that they would not neglect to do so for his sake.

"In spite of the letter which Mr. Wakefield read to me," said he, "I cannot help thinking that the miniature is probably still in her possession. In what consists the mystery, I cannot imagine ; but I am persuaded that some mystery does exist, and I think that he has meant to deceive me on the subject."



## CHAPTER VIII.

Once more upon the waters ! yet once more !  
 And the waves bound beneath me as a steed  
 That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar !  
 Swift be their guidance wheresoe'er it lead !  
 Though the strain'd mast should quiver as a reed,  
 And the rent canvass fluttering strew the gale,  
 Still must I on ; for I am as a weed  
 Flung from the rock on ocean's foam to sail  
 Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempests breath  
 prevail.

BYRON.

THE eve of Dacre's departure was come, and the duchess invited him to walk with her. She thought it would be a relief to his mind to talk over openly, once more, the one engrossing subject of their thoughts ; and she almost hoped he would leave with her some message that should oblige her to speak of him to Emily, or that he would at least empower her to assure Emily of his constancy, should any unforeseen change on her part make that assurance of avail. But Dacre did neither. He made no allusion to the possibility of any such change. He made no profession of constancy. He did not even now speculate on the cause of her conduct towards him. He warmly expressed his sense of the kindness he had received from both the duke and herself. He spoke of the past with the mournful pleasure of one who has no future. Of the future he said nothing. There seemed upon his mind a settled gloom, through which no ray of hope could penetrate. In reply to the duchess's inquiry when he thought it probable he should return, he had said, "Perhaps never !" and there was a more decided disinclination to look forward than he had ever evinced before.

Nothing could be more melancholy than the impression which this conversation had left upon the mind of the duchess : she had caught the infection of his hopelessness ; and when she bid him good-by, as they retired at night, it was with unmixed sympathy in his feelings. She felt that if ever they met again, it would only be after such a lapse of years, as had effaced from all but memory every thought that now possessed his soul.

Harry Molesworth accompanied him to his room. To him it was a still sadder parting ; for Dacre had been his friend through life, and his warm heart bled to see him thus deprived of every source from which the cup of bliss was filled for him. "Dacre," said he, "I know not for how long you may now think of leaving England. Heaven knows that this separation is painful enough, but to us it shall not be a long one."

"I fear," replied Dacre, "that my ever returning must be doubtful. I can now foresee no time at which it is probable. You know I am a lonely being. I have nothing to bring me back."

"No, no !" said Harry, "do not say that—you must look upon us as a brother and a sister ; and if you do not return, we mean to join you on the continent. Mary and I have already talked on the subject. Do not say that you have no ties whilst we are alive."

Dacre shook his hand, and thanked him.

"Now," said Harry, "tell me if there is anything in the world that I can do for you during your absence."

Dacre paused for an instant.

"Yes," said he, "there is one request I would make to you." He hesitated. "You know how much she liked your wife. Should their friendship continue, you will have frequent opportunities of knowing how she is. Do not think it a weakness in me, Harry," continued he, with some emotion, "but I would wish to know all that you can tell. Do not be afraid of hurting my feelings. They are wounded beyond the power of feeling fresh pain ; but I would always wish to be told how she is in health, in mind, in spirits ; where she is, how she passes the time, who are her admirers, who amongst them seems most —" He stopped. "No," continued he, speaking quickly, "no, you need not tell me that—all but that ;

I shall know without. And, Harry," said he, lowering his voice, "on your honour I know I may rely; promise me, that except to your wife, you will not betray this wish of mine to any one."

Harry promised, and they parted. Dacre sat up all night. He was busily engaged in the arrangement of papers, and in writing some letters. At the hour appointed, the following morning, he was ready to accompany Mr. Howard on the projected tour.

It was a fine spring morning. The sun shone bright, the landscape was decked with blossoms; the trees were just tinged with the light verdure of the fresh young leaves; the song of gladness was raised by a chorus of birds; the air was perfumed by the sweetness of earth, and the sounds of cheerful industry, and the mirth of childish gaiety, broke ever and anon upon the ear. It was a morning that seemed as the fair promise of our fairest wishes; it was a day that spoke of youth, and life, and opening joys; it was a day that had no sympathy with the mourner, the disappointed, the wretched; it was a day that seemed to mock the gloom it did not share, and to darken the shadows of sorrow, by displaying, in the full contrast of light, its brightness and its joy. It was thus that Dacre felt its influence: and as Mr. Howard remarked, with unusual animation, what a beautiful day they had for their journey, Dacre simply replied, "I believe so." Then, leaning back in the carriage, he gave himself up to thoughts too much embittered by regrets for enjoyment, and yet too fondly cherished to be abandoned.

It is sad to feel in youth, that we must light up the future by the past; sad to think that remembrance now must live where hope had bloomed: and whilst we dwell upon the lifeless image of departed joy, still nursed in memory's arms, we trace in sorrow every feature of that time, as though we gazed upon the cold corpse of some dear friend, whose smile had cheered, whose counsel guided, and whose love supported us—without whom life is scarce existence, and content but resignation. Never had that sympathy in feeling, which first attracted Dacre and Emily towards each other, existed so strongly as in their sorrow; never had they seemed so mutually to need the support of each other, as now in their distress. But it could not be, and

both must now live on the past. One hope alone remained to her : yes ! even in her misery, one hope had sprung to life, and, with the fond disinterested love of woman, that hope she cherished—the hope he would forget her.

Lady Kendal determined to leave London, and to return to Oakley Park. Emily was well satisfied with this arrangement : she thought that perfect quiet, and yet some little necessary employment of business, might be of service to her mother's health ; and Lady Kendal fondly flattered herself that the repose of the country, and the change of air, might, in some degree heal the wounds that affliction and disappointment had inflicted upon her child. The burst of agony that had followed on the first shock of their bereavement was over ; the thrill of horror and the shriek of despair were past ; and tears had flowed, and sorrow pained, till grief was dry, and feeling almost dead. The starting sleep, the moistened pillow, and the feverish hope, that all might still have been a dream, was now exchanged for that dull oppressive consciousness of misery, which attends the waking hours of those in whom time has accustomed, but not yet lessened, the burthen, of wo. The garb of misery, which shocks us with its hateful newness, was assumed : the hours for meals again were fixed ; and then, in silent sadness, once more they met in presence of their household. The regularity of domestic order was re-established, and marked the periods of the weary day. All that was outward returned to the semblance of peace. There was calmness above, but the grief which had ruffled the surface at first was still there ; it had only sunk deeper below, from the force of its pressure.

It was a few days previous to their removal from town, that Emily found upon her table, when she rose in the morning, a letter which had come by the early post. The direction was in an unknown hand ; the seal was one which she knew the duchess of Bolton was in the habit of using. She opened the letter, thinking it was probably from her cousin. The letter was from Dacre. She staggered to a chair, and endeavoured to compose herself sufficiently to understand its purport. Her face reddened, as she hastily read it ; and then, for a moment, she held the paper in her hands, as if determined to tear it up : but she perused it once more, and, for awhile, she wept bitterly.

Then, refolding the letter, she placed it in the innermost recess of her writing-desk, locked it carefully, and descended, as usual, to breakfast. To none did she mention the receipt of that letter.

Emily was again seated in her favourite study at Oakley Park. Everything had been replaced there in its usual order. The half-finished drawing—the guitar—the work-frame—the music—the ornaments—all were again uncased. The room had assumed its wonted look; all but cheerfulness was there.

Nothing adds more to the consciousness of woe than being surrounded, in vain, by all that wealth can purchase or luxury invent. When the heart sickens at the sight of objects that in happier times gave pleasure, how painfully is the conviction pressed upon the mind, that it was to the lost happiness within, they must have owed their power to please? When the dull cold eye gazes with indifference on the unaltered baubles that have amused, and the employments that have occupied, who is not the more forcibly reminded of the change that has been wrought in themselves? and whilst memory quickly summons the sad contrast before us, the bitter certainty becomes more fixed in our hearts, that the train of joyous thought they once could fire has vanished from our minds.

Emily Somers, in time, resumed her duties, and employed her hours. To the wants and the comforts of others she again ministered: for those who were happy, the smile of benevolence passed over her face: she thought on what they had been spared, but she forgot to rejoice; for her sympathies were no longer with the gay. It was now the voice of suffering and sorrow that spoke to her in the language she best understood.

Who has not in his summer ramble, marked the course of some bright rivulet that hurries on to lose its brightness in the dark waters below? Such had been her fate. Her life had been like that clear and sparkling stream, which sported in the sun and danced to the wind, now catching all the varied charms of day, whilst the brightness reflected gained lustre by reflection. But now, that life was changed; the sparkling stream was gone. The water, pure as before, had sought the shade;—dark, deep, serene, it paused. The sombre tints of all around stood in still and solemn

reflection on the unruffled surface of the pool. All was sadness ; and the stream, which anon had illumined the gay landscape, now repeated the sadness which alone it reflected.

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## CHAPTER IX.

In all creation I but know  
 Two separate worlds : the one that small,  
 Beloved, and concentrated spot  
 Where Lea was—the other, all  
 The dull wide waste where she was not.

MOORE.

It is surely one of Nature's best gifts to look with delight on Nature's works. The contemplation of fine scenery is one of those enjoyments which can endure when all others have failed. It is open alike to the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the gay and the sorrowful. It needs not learning to understand, nor the practised eye of art to admire. We see its beauty—we feel its power—our thoughts are raised—our hearts are purified ; and the spirit thus exalted, bows with gratitude to Heaven for the creation of Earth. We cannot suppose that all who travel, and gaze, and admire, are equally accessible to feelings such as these. There are, of course, degrees in the pleasure derived, and variations in their course, though springing from one source ; but, in all, it seems to awaken some exciting sensation. It raises the spirits—it soothes the wretched—it invigorates the languid—it tempts a spirit of adventure—it casts away the petty cares of life, and leaves their prisoner to enjoyment.

We are often disposed to quarrel with the presence of those unrefined specimens of our fellow-countrymen, with whom, travel where we will—on mountain or plain—on river or lake—by sea or by land—by steam or by coach

we are sure to be molested. The similarity of language makes us conscious of the dissimilarity of manners. Our *amour propre* blushes that others should see that vulgarity, which we perhaps can alone appreciate. We instantly perceive their grade—we do not stop to know their feelings—we think they vulgarize the scene—we ask not if they sympathize in our delight. We turn with disgust from Mr. Simkins's preparations for a pic-nic on the mountains; we say he views the Alps as Richmond Hill; we wish that Mrs. Simkins, with her reticle and parasol, had never quitted the purlieus of London; and then we gaze with romantic admiration on the troop of young students, who loiter, staff in hand and pipe in mouth, before the door, tricked out in all the fancy foppery of a well-studied picturesqueness.

Yet this is not fair. Our prejudices are too easily offended by one, our imaginations too quickly captivated by the other. We do not remember that the mind of the former may dwell in admiration on all around, whilst the thoughts of the latter may be centred in admiration of himself. We think that those whose presence decks the scene will enter best into its charms; and, whilst we loathe the sight of sandwiches and rolls, forget that, though enthusiasm will revive with refreshment, it withers away where frivolity blooms. The details of life can never sound romantic, and even the outset on a mountain expedition will not be exempt from this rule.—“Where is my great-coat?” exclaims one voice. “Don’t forget the telescope!” cries another. “Is the bundle put up?” “I am sure the mule will kick!” “Nonsense, my dear, you will be tired to death with walking!” “Papa! may I walk?” “Mamma! may I ride?” “Where are the guides?” “Thomas, take care of the children!” “Make haste or we shall lose the sunset!” “Now all ready!”—and away go a happy family party, full of frolic, fear, and expectation, to toil up the mountain-side.

It was one fine summer’s afternoon, when just such a party had left the inn of a little village in Switzerland, that two English gentlemen desired that a guide for themselves and a mule for their valise might be ready to attend them up the Righi. Whilst these preparations were making, they entered the inn; and first they amused themselves

with perusing the impressions recorded in the *Livre des Voyageurs*, of the dangers and wonders of the expedition they were about to make; and then they listened, with equal amusement, to the conversation of those who were engaged in the discussion of their own feats, intended or performed.

"A most tremendous descent, indeed!" said a little, fat, bald-headed man, who wiped his forehead at the recollection how hot he had been.—"We came down wonderfully well!"

"No wonder," replied his companion, with the air of a coming joke, "for you came down so often."

"Come, come, James, remember it was my first attempt, so no jokes on me and my pole."

"Very true, Mr. Brown, very true; no man succeeds in his first Polar expedition, so I wish you better success next time."

"*Monsieur a vu le lever du soleil ce matin, n'est-ce pas?*" said a young French traveller in a green shooting-jacket and a willow travelling-cap.

"*Oui, Monsher!*"

"*J'espere que Monsieur en a été content.*"

"*Cette tres* — James! what is *wonderful* in French?" said Mr. Brown, *sotto voce*, to his companion. "*Cette ettonant, Monsher.*" "What an odd idea," said Brown again, *sotto voce*, "to suppose I should be contented on the mountain!"

The Frenchman announced his intention of going up as soon as his guide was ready.

"*Moi je dis que c'est bieng dangeroo a venir en bas encore,*" observed Mr. Brown, feeling his superiority in having already accomplished the feat.

"*Comment! Monsieur trouve la descente dangereuse! Apparemment Monsieur n'a jamais fait la descente des montagnes Russes?*"

"*Non, Monsher! je n'ai pas etty dans Russie.*"

"*Ce n'est pas nécessaire, Monsieur; c'est a Paris qu'on trouve les Montagnes Russes. Ah! ah! c'est une chose a voir, cela; parlez moi de c'a en fait de descente! Je parie qu'ici on ne trouve rien de pareil.*"

Brown had nothing to say to this; for the Frenchman spoke so fast, he could not follow his meaning.



"T., my dear!" said a middle-aged lady to her husband, "don't your knees ache dreadful bad?"

T.'s knees did ache.

"I never felt mine in such a way before."

"Perhaps, Ma'am," said a gentleman who had lately joined their party, "you never walked down a mountain before?"

"Why, I can't say I ever did walk down a *real* mountain before," replied the lady: "but I know what a steep hill is pretty well."

"You have been in Scotland then, perhaps, Ma'am,—or Wales?"

"No, Sir! I can't say that I have ever been much from London before; but many and many a time have I ran up and down that hill in Kensington Gardens, which, some people who have travelled say, looks for all the world like the *creature* of a volcano."

The two gentlemen were now summoned. "*Tout est pret*," said the landlord, with a bow; and, in a few minutes more, Dacre and Mr. Howard had entered upon that undertaking, which they had just heard so amply discussed in the *salle publique*. As they proceeded on their walk, they saw groups of other amateur mountaineers collected round a little chapel: it was that erected on the spot where Gessler fell by the arrow of Tell. They stopped, like the others, to look at what was worth seeing only from its association with the event it records.

"I almost doubt," observed Mr. Howard, as they continued their route, "whether, at the end of five hundred years, the memory of Napoleon or the Duke of Wellington will be more cherished or renowned in their respective countries than that of this simple mountain hero in his. Time seems to have no power to lessen their interest in his name and deeds."

"Because time cannot lessen their interest in the cause for which he fought," replied Dacre. "Others have fought from ambition—they have fought for power, for profit, or for fame; but this simple peasant fought from patriotism—he fought for liberty, and his name is identified with the cause."

"And liberty," said Howard, smiling, "is, I know, the goddess of your idolatry."

"Yes!" replied Dacre, "I will not deny my worship, though not quite such an enthusiast as you suppose; for I believe you really sometimes think me capable of wishing to sacrifice my divinity as an offering to herself."

"Many have done so before," replied Mr. Howard; "for there are many whose zeal has outstepped their judgment."

"Probably," said Dacre, "with many the cause of liberty has not been a matter of judgment."

"I should think certainly not," observed Mr. Howard, "to judge by the patriotism and courage displayed by men of desperate character or fortune."

"There is no doubt," rejoined Dacre, "that this zeal in behalf of others springs sometimes from indifference to ourselves. There is naturally a greater willingness to risk a life that has lost its value to its owner. Perhaps," said he thoughtfully, "the opinions of all are too easily biassed by their feelings; perhaps even the liberality and patriotism of a disappointed man may be tinged in its course by something of the morbid discontent that lies in his mind."

Mr. Howard did not reply. They walked on in silence for some way. The summit of the mountain was now nearly gained, and every traveller pressed forward to catch a view from the top of the cloudless sunset. It was a striking sight to see its brightness sink behind the mountain-ridge. Dacre lingered long, to watch its glories pass away: but his reverie was disturbed by the prudent suggestion of the guides, not to expose himself, when heated with walking, to the air after sunset; and he followed the example of his fellow-travellers, who had long since retired to the hovel on the Righi Kulm, which is gladly accepted there as an inn.

It often proved fortunate for Dacre, that the mind of his companion was less pre-occupied than his own, and not least so upon the present occasion; for whilst Dacre abandoned himself to the sad enjoyment of his own meditations, Mr. Howard had secured, in the scramble, one of the tiny cabins destined for the accommodation of tourists. It was not long before the hour of refreshment had assembled together all the guests at the *table d'hôte* of the one sitting-room. There was a strange confusion of tongues in that

low room ; it seemed as if the builders of Babel had there taken refuge.

Dacre was not inclined to talk, but he sat and listened with the interest of curiosity to the various topics started by the heterogeneous company around. Every man seems possessed upon these occasions with a spirit of anecdote and adventure, and the generality insist upon being the heroes of their own tale. All have their hair-breadth escapes to tell ; all have attempted to do more than ever was done before ; all have had something that even added to the difficulty of performing impossible feats. Some, to be sure, have been foiled by the cowardice of guides—others defeated by the enmity of the elements : none have ever been known to flinch from fatigue or fear ; and the quiet man, who dreamed not before that day of greater peril than the English stage-coach, the steam-boat, or the *diligence*, now hears bandied about from mouth to mouth the appalling words of yawning chasm, foaming torrents, hanging rocks, abyss below, tremendous precipices, overwhelming avalanches ;—he hears that, if he would see anything of the country he is visiting, he must thread his dangerous way through terrors such as these, and encounter the perils of the sudden storm, the timid boatmen, and the ill-constructed boat.

It was after several anecdotes had been told, and several adventures recounted, that Dacre's attention was attracted by the sound of a voice at the further end of the room. He thought it was one with which he was acquainted ; but the person was seated on the same side of the table as himself. He could not, therefore, see from whom it had proceeded, and the din of conversation prevented his hearing again with sufficient distinctness, to be certain that it was a tone with which he was familiar.

The repast over, there was a move in the room ; and Dacre walked up to the end from whence he had heard the voice which had excited his interest, and was presently greeted, with all the surprise and pleasure of an unexpected meeting in an outlandish place, by Sir Edward Bradford.

Since the visit at Denham, all jealousy towards Sir Edward had been extinguished. Whether he had or had not been an admirer of Emily's, was a matter of no importance

to Dacre from the moment he was sure that he was not likely to prove a successful rival ; and from that time he had felt that he owed him some reparation, for the many uncharitable feelings he had previously harboured against him. Sir Edward had always liked Dacre, and their acquaintance with each other had much increased on their return to London subsequent to that visit. Sir Edward was travelling in company with his sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth ; and all expressed their pleasure at this unexpected rencontre.

What a crowd of recollections did their presence call into vivid existence ! He had never seen Mr. or Mrs. Wentworth before or since the visit to Hatton, and the sight of them at once recalled in detail every circumstance of that time. He thought on the conversation that had there passed between Emily and himself : he remembered upon one or two occasions the tone of melancholy which he thought had then tinged her remarks. He had since attributed it only to the uncertainty which the Duchess of Bolton had told him she had there felt of his own attachment for her. But now it occurred to him that she had always foreseen the misery and disappointment that had since befallen them : he thought this seeming presentiment of evil was, in fact, the knowledge that it must happen. But still, painfully as these reminiscences and reflections pressed upon his mind, there was a pleasure in finding himself in company with those with whom the thoughts of Emily were associated, by whom Emily was known, and by whom Emily was loved ; and before they retired to rest that evening, it was agreed that Dacre and Mr. Howard should join their party upon the two or three expeditions which they had just projected.

## CHAPTER X.

No—never shall I lose the trace  
 Of what I've felt in this bright place.  
 And should my spirit's hope grow weak,  
     Should I, O God, e'er doubt thy power,  
 This mighty scene again I'll seek,  
     At this same calm and glowing hour ;  
 And here, at the sublimest shrine  
     That Nature ever rear'd to Thee,  
 Rekindle all that hope divine,  
     And *feel* my immortality.

MOORE.

It was little more than twilight the following morning, when Dacre and his companion were roused. They were desirous of watching from the earliest dawn the gradual approach of the sun ; and were the first on that morning who found themselves upon the spot where all had assembled the preceding evening to see its decline. The Righi is generally selected by travellers as the first spot from which they view the wonders of the Alps. It affords a fine panoramic display of the surrounding heights ; and the spectator thus acquires some knowledge of the forms and positions of the different chains of mountains.

When Dacre and Mr. Howard first gazed around them, it seemed as if they stood upon an island : nothing was to be seen above but the cold grey outline of the mountain-ridge ; nothing below but the curling waves of some vast sheet of water : not a valley was to be traced, not a village to be descried. Had a deluge occurred in the night, it could not more effectually have seemed to efface by flood every object from their view. They had heard of this perfect deception produced by the morning mist alluded to the evening before, but till now they had found it difficult to believe how complete was the resemblance to the wav-

ing waters. The sound of voices was now heard : they turned to look who was coming ; a motley crew were seen to hasten towards the spot on which they stood. Sunrise was at hand. The inmates of the two receptacles for tourists, came hurrying up, with every imperfection of toilet, —unshaved, unwashed, uncurled, and half undressed : cloaks, coats, shawls, nightcaps, and handkerchiefs were pressed into the service, to conceal the deficiencies which haste had occasioned, or to protect the wearers from the morning chill. The mist gradually arose and dispersed : the heavens were suffused with pink ; and now the mountain-top catches from behind the light, and the snow seems to blush at the approach of the day.

"I never till now," observed Dacre, "felt in full force the term of 'rosy-fingered morn!'"

Fresh objects caught the increasing light. The coming day seemed to cast its brightness before, and all stood in silent expectation of that moment when the sun should rear his head above the mountain's summit. At length the golden rays are seen to shoot above the earth ; a blaze of light appears ; and in the heavens sits the monarch of the day, shedding life and heat on all below. It was a glorious sight—inspiring, yet solemn.

"There is no religion unaided by revelation which seems to me so natural as the worship of the sun," remarked Dacre to his companion, as they descended from the spot on which they had so long gazed on that mysterious power.

"I agree with you," replied Howard ; "and it seems a so much purer religion than that which consisted in deifying our own degrading senses."

Dacre and Mr. Howard now passed nearly a fortnight in company with the Wentworths and Sir Edward Bradford. They had left England just before Lord Kendal's death ; and whilst Howard and Dacre had been travelling in Germany, they had been touring elsewhere. Sir Edward had seen enough, from the time they had met at Denham, to feel no doubt of the mutual attachment between Dacre and Emily. He knew that Lord Kendal's death must have necessarily delayed the fulfilment of any engagement that might subsist, and he thought it probable that Dacre was now travelling on the Continent merely to help the tedious

time away that must pass before he could claim her as his bride. Under this impression, he sometimes alluded to Dacre's return in a manner that was far from agreeable to his feelings.

It did not escape Sir Edward's observation that Dacre was particularly depressed in spirits; and more than once his sister had told him, she was sure that some cause of unhappiness weighed upon his mind. But Dacre had owned he was not in good health; and Sir Edward thought that, and his temporary absence from Lady Emily, very sufficient causes for his present dejection. Sir Edward once asked him some trifling questions relating to Lady Kendal. It was evident he did not hear that name with composure. He answered the question in a hurried manner, and then dropped behind, as if to gaze on the scenery through which they had just passed; and for a while did not again join the party.

At length the time came when they were to part company. Dacre's spirits had rather improved during this mountain tour. They had traversed many of the well-known passes; and the contemplation of such scenes, together with the constant excitement of bodily exercise, had in some slight degree lulled, for a moment, the gnawing grief which preyed upon his heart.

There is something in the wildness and sublimity of mountain scenery, that tends to remind us rather of eternity, than of decay. The perishable works of man are no where to be seen. No city lies in gloomy ruins, to show the outline of its faded greatness—no remnant of a sanctuary here stands to show the worship that has passed away. We see no falling records of the glorious deeds of those, whose names are learnt in history's page. We stand upon the mountain, and we scarcely know that man exists upon the earth. This is not the land where arts have died, or science been forgot—these rocks never echoed the eloquence of orators, or the song of the poet—these waters never bore the proud ships of the merchant—this soil never yielded to man the fruits of his industry. It is not here that the finger of Time can be recognized. In vain would he set his mark on snows that never melt, or disturb the fast-bound forms of adamantean ice. In vain he stretches out his hand, where the rushing torrent, and the roaring

waterfall, blest with an eternity of youth, dash on their headlong course, regardless of the blighting power that withers strength, or lulls to rest the creations and the creatures of mortality. Here may we pause, and say that Time has lost his power. Here may we view the faint efforts of Time overthrown in an instant. Changes there are ; but the work of an hour has defeated the slow progress of decay. The lightning of the thunder-storm—the blowing tempest—the engulfing flood—the overspreading avalanche—have effaced from the surface of nature the impress of Time, and left nought in the change to remind us of age. Surely there are scenes in life which seem created to awaken in mankind the recollection,—that even Time can lose its power. Who will not feel the nothingness of the pleasures—the cares—nay, even the sorrows of our petty span, when, for a moment, he dwells with his heart and soul upon the thoughts of an eternity ! Yes ! it will sober the gay—it will comfort the grieved.

Thoughts such as these had their influence on Dacre. He tried to fix his mind on hopes beyond the grave, and to trust in immortality for a still higher happiness than that now lost to him on earth.

As Sir Edward perceived some improvement in the evenness of his spirits, he was the more convinced that his sister was wrong in supposing there was any serious ground of unhappiness ; and, as they walked out together the evening before they parted, Sir Edward again spoke of his return to England.

“Dacre,” said he, “I hope that you will make up your mind to come forward in public life. I think it would suit you.”

“I am surprised to receive such advice from you,” replied Dacre, half smiling. “I thought you were the last person to advocate the cause of patriotic exertion.”

“Very true,” replied Sir Edward, “so far as concerns myself. I must try to defend the line I have taken ; but do not suppose that I would recommend one like you to follow the example of an idle man.”

“Do you repent, then ?” said Dacre, wishing to keep the conversation away from the consideration of his own prospects.—“Do you now regret the want of some positive employment ?”



"No," replied Sir Edward, "I will not own that I either repent or regret; for that might imply a willingness to change my manner of life. Perhaps I feel it would have been better, had I originally adopted a different course; but that is nothing to the purpose now—it is too late to change. You are some seven or eight years younger than I am, and these are precious years in acquiring the habits of business and industry."

"They will be of no avail to me," said Dacre, musingly. Sir Edward did not hear him.

"I shall rejoice," continued he, "to see you profit by those years. A man never requires occupation more than after he is married; and I sincerely hope to see you, not only a happy, but a distinguished member of society."

Dacre was silent for a minute. He struggled to speak with composure, and he did so.

"Bradford," said he, "you misunderstood me; but I thank you for the kindness and the interest you have expressed, and, in return, I must be candid with you. I do not mean to return to England—perhaps never—certainly not for years. I told you the other day I meant to go to Italy. That will be but the beginning of my journey. Ask me no questions," said he, as he saw Sir Edward was going to speak.—"Ask me no questions; it would be painful to answer them. I tell you that circumstances have occurred, which have defeated every hope of happiness I had formed. There is no one in England to whom my presence is necessary; and I shall seek in the restless life of constant motion some diversion from my present thoughts."

"I will ask you but one thing," said Sir Edward. "Is there no hope that time may work a change in your favour?"

"None," replied Dacre, in a low but firm voice. "I ought not even to wish it should."

A short pause ensued. Dacre broke the silence. "Bradford!" said he, "there was a time when your presence cost me all the bitter pangs of jealousy. If I read your feelings right, you have set me a noble example in your wishes for my happiness. She is free to choose," added he, with some emotion, "and if her choice should fall on you"—He hesitated a moment—extended his hand to Sir Edward—and said, "I will try to follow it."

They shook hands.

"We will not speak on this again," said Dacre.

They had by this time regained the inn, and immediately separated.

A strange tumult of feelings now arose in the mind of Sir Edward. Dacre had been right in supposing that he had been not insensible to the attractions of Lady Emily; but scarcely had he himself become aware of a growing preference towards her, than he perceived that which at once checked his indulgence in a feeling which he thought could not be returned. He was persuaded that Dacre was already the object of her affections, and in that conviction he had tried to regard her with the feelings of friendship. How far he really succeeded might be doubtful; but he thought himself successful, and thought that, in his readiness to go abroad just when it seemed her marriage was most probable, he was actuated by no other motive than his usual desire to be in the society of his sister.

Now a new prospect was opened to his view. The barrier whom he had regarded as an insuperable barrier between Lady Emily and himself was now removed—removed, he concluded, by her own desire. Dacre was not, then, the object of her affections. He had said she was free. He had said that he ought not to wish that time should make a change in his own favour. Dacre had even hinted at the possibility of his becoming the object of her choice; and Sir Edward was thus released from any scruple on his account in endeavouring to engage the heart that was still free. With these feelings Sir Edward returned, with his sister and Mr. Wentworth, to England.

## CHAPTER XI.

Dans cette assemblée de Rome où se trouvaient Oswald et Corinne, il y avait des hommes qui perdaient des sommes énormes au jeu, sans qu'on pût l'apercevoir le moins du monde sur leur physiognomie. Quand les passions arrivent à un certain degré de violence, elles craignent les témoins, et se voilent presque toujours par le silence et l'immobilité.

*Corinne, MAD. DE STAEL.*

"ONLY think, girls," said Mrs. Ashby one evening to her daughters, "of my having seen our old friend, Mr. Dacre, get out of his travelling-carriage this afternoon, at one of the hotels in the Piazza di Spagna."

"Who did you say, Mrs. Ashby?" inquired some of the company, eager to know who was to be added to the English *coterie* at Rome.

Mrs. Ashby named him again. Many had heard of him, but it so happened that none present were acquainted with him. Mrs. Ashby perceived her superior advantage.

"Francis Dacre is an old ally of ours: he is so agreeable! such a dear creature! I wonder you don't know him," continued she, addressing herself to a fellow-labourer in the vineyard of Fashion: "he was always everywhere in London." A slight emphasis on *he* was very expressive, and the lady felt abashed at not knowing Mr. Dacre.

"They say he is engaged to be married to Lady Emily Somers," observed a gentleman.

"So I understand," said a lady. "I believe it was her father's wish that the marriage should take place immediately, but Lady Kendal, I hear, is a strange person, and would not spare her daughter for a year to come."

"How very selfish!" said a third.

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Mrs. Ashby; "but I believe I may say, on the best authority, that there never was any engagement at all between Mr. Dacre and Lady Emily: just a little flirtation, perhaps, but nothing more—nothing more, I am sure, on *his* side. We know him very well." And Mrs. Ashby glanced at her eldest daughter as she spoke. The look succeeded. One or two of the company said to themselves, "Perhaps he is one of Miss Ashby's admirers." Julia Ashby said nothing, but looked down when Dacre's engagement was discussed; and Miss Cecilia said, with a sweet smile, that he was "*so nice*."

Ere Mrs. Ashby retired to rest that night, she had penned, in the neatest of hands, on the pinkest of glazed papers, a pressing invitation to Dacre to dine with them. Dacre had no excuse to offer for declining. The invitation was accordingly accepted; and not many days after his arrival at Rome, he found himself dining with a select few at Mrs. Ashby's house. The ladies received him with flattering cordiality, and treated him as if he were really the old and intimate friend they had represented him to be; and if ever there was a moment in his life when being thus received by the Ashbys could have been pleasing to Dacre, it was on his first and lonely arrival in a great city, before he had engaged himself in any pursuit, or known with whom (if any) he should be disposed to associate.

They talked of England to him, and they talked of the Molesworths. They knew how much the Harry Molesworths had been liked by the Duchess of Bolton, and Lady Kendal, and others; and so they even talked of *dear Mary*,—ay, the little nonentity, poor little insignificant Mary Bingley, had risen to the dignity of "*dear Mary*;" and her pretty *naïf* manner, and her graceful air, and her charming expression of countenance, had all been perceived and appreciated, and she was "*dear Mary*, the friend of our youth." Dacre was amused at this change; but still he liked them better for the tone which they had now adopted, and said to himself, as he quitted the house, "After all, they are pretty good-humoured girls;" and he accepted a second invitation to their house, for a little *soirée*.

"Just a few friends," said Mrs. Ashby, "have promised

to look in upon us on Friday evening—just, you know, in a quiet way, and we shall be *so* glad if you would come.”

Dacre went, and was surprised to find that “just a few friends in a quiet way,” were as many people as the rooms would hold, making the usual hubbub of a crammed assembly. The company was chiefly English, but sufficiently interspersed with the stray inhabitants of other nations, to remind the guests that they were not in London. A card-table was placed in the corner of one of the rooms, and round this table stood a little knot of men, who might be presumed to have betted on the game they were watching with so much interest. It was sometimes whispered that large sums had been lost and won at Mrs. Ashby’s; but of that she knew nothing. Mrs. Ashby wished to secure the presence of some of those to whom the card-table was an attraction; and she always said it was so ill-bred to inquire into other people’s concerns, that she would not for the world have informed herself of the truth of any such ill-natured rumours.

Dacre had listened with tolerable patience to all that Miss Ashby had to say of the dreadful fatigue of seeing the sights of Rome. They were all very interesting, and full of recollections, as she said; but then one could not help being tired with seeing so many: and, indeed, after a time, one felt there was a great sameness in these sights—always ruins, or statues, or pictures. There was a *want* of variety, and the shops were not good. He then turned to Miss Cecilia, and she was, as usual, in raptures with every thing. She did so much like going to all the galleries: it was “such fun!” and then all the old buildings looked “so delightfully melancholy,” and it struck her what “a capital gallop” might be danced in the Vatican library; and the vespers at St. Peter’s were “as good as an opera.”

Mrs. Ashby had cause to be thoroughly well pleased with her daughters. She could not bear to have sisters alike. Twin cherries on one stalk were so uninteresting, and then only “one style of men” would be attracted; now, she might be sure that those who did not like Julia must like Cecilia, and *vice versa*. Dacre was, however, this evening, equally unattracted by the languid Julia and the lively Cecilia; and, unamused and unoccupied, he rose

from his seat, and sauntered into the small room where the cards were going on.

"Dacre, will you bet?" said one of the lookers-on, with whom he was slightly acquainted. Dacre approached the table and made the bet.

The mention of his name, which had been audibly pronounced, seemed to have attracted the attention of a stranger who was standing by, for, on hearing it, he immediately turned his head, and for a moment glanced at Dacre. A profusion of dark hair, whiskers, and mustachios gave him the appearance of being either a native of Italy, or of some other nation of the south. He appeared to be interested in the game, but still his eye was constantly wandering towards Dacre: it was instantly withdrawn when the look was returned. But Dacre felt conscious he was watched. It occurred to him that possibly it was somebody with whom he had been acquainted, and whose name and appearance he had forgotten; and with that idea he looked, whilst the stranger was engaged in whispering to a gentleman who stood near him, to see if he could recognize his features. He began to think he had seen him before, and tried to recollect all the foreigners he had known. Just at that moment the stranger spoke, and in an accent that no Englishman could fail to recognize as that of a compatriot, for not only was the language free from any foreign accent, but partook in some degree of that knowing tone, and slangish expression, adopted by a certain set in England, and which may be fairly considered (proud distinction!) to be unattainable by any foreigner.

Dacre inquired of the only person with whom he was acquainted, the name of this man; but he could not tell.

"I never asked his name," said he, "though I have seen him here before. He looks like some English or Irish tiger, with a fine black wig, and a strong turn for play."

Dacre lost and won a few small sums by way of occupation; then retired to his lodgings, and fell asleep, whilst trying to remember where he had seen that face before, and why the stranger had so often fixed his eyes upon him.

Dacre had taken leave of his companion, Mr. Howard,

in the north of Italy. He was now quite alone ; and though his loneliness rendered him more than ever a prey to the painful recollections which dwelt on his mind, he had no inclination to seek for society. Mrs. Ashby was always willing to save him that trouble, by her never-ceasing assiduities, to persuade him to join their parties for morning sight-seeing, or evening *coleries*. But he felt more pleasure in contemplating the wonders of art, or the remains of antiquity, alone, than when the chain of thought to which these objects gave rise, was for ever snapped and broken by the inappropriate exclamations of Cecilia, and the misplaced sentimentality of her eldest sister.

Not many days after the evening party at which Dacre had been perplexed by the face of the stranger, he received from Mrs. Ashby an invitation to accompany them to the villa Ludovisi to see the famous Aurora of Guercino. It was only by special favour that admittance could be there gained, and he therefore accepted the offer. Cecilia thought she should like a pony chaise, "just such a shape as the car;" and Julia said how fatiguing it was to look up. Cecilia pointed out a bit of the drapery that "would be such a nice colour for a gown." Julia, looking serious, whispered something about lovely grouping. (She had learnt that expression since she came to Rome.) Mrs. Ashby put up her glass, and shook her head significantly, and said "Wonderful!" and "Mr. Dacre, I know you can appreciate fine pictures: you and Julia have both, I believe, a passion for the Fine Arts."

Dacre thought how provoking it was to have his pleasure destroyed by such foolish observations; and turned from the subject of the Fine Arts to that of Mrs. Ashby's "few friends," on Friday evening. He asked her the names of some who had been present, describing their appearance or position, and then describing that of the person he had seen by the card-table, he inquired who he also was. Mrs. Ashby did not know. Miss Ashby never troubled herself to ask the names of strangers: she was always content with old friends; but Cecilia exclaimed, "Oh, Mamma, I dare say it was Mr. Harper."

Dacre inquired if they were much acquainted with him.

"Not yet," said Cecilia, "but we mean to know him

well. They say he is just one of those dear odd people, unlike every body else. He is not very young ; but they say he is a great traveller, and is so amusing : I do like amusing people so much !”

The name of Harper brought no recollection to Dacre's mind, and he thought he must have been mistaken, in supposing he had ever seen him before. He gave no reason for having made the inquiry ; and, availing himself of the first opportunity of getting out of the carriage, he took his leave, and was not sorry to find himself once more alone. He wandered to the gardens of a villa, and from thence enjoyed, in full and uninterrupted delight, a view of the city before him. He had been leaning for some time against the balustrade of a terrace. Two people walked by ; but he was endeavouring to make a little sketch of the view, and it was not till they had passed that he looked up. On raising his head he perceived that one of the two was Crofton. He had heard from the Ashby's that he was at Rome : but he had not sought him. They had not yet met ; and he could scarcely help rejoicing that Crofton had now passed him unnoticed. Dacre felt as if the cold sarcastic tone that pervaded the mind and conversation of Crofton, would not render him an agreeable companion to one who, like himself, was wounded in feeling, and depressed in spirits. They turned down a walk that ran at right angles to that on which Dacre was standing ; and as they turned, he perceived that the gentleman by whom Mr. Crofton was accompanied, was the person he had seen at Mrs. Ashby's.

He continued his sketch.

“Dacre ! by all that's wonderful, is that you ?” exclaimed a voice close to him, in a tone of surprise.

Dacre looked up : Crofton was close to him, and he thought there was more of cordiality in his manner, than he had ever yet testified. Whether his surprise at finding Dacre there was quite so great as it appeared, might be questionable, and Dacre did not think fit to inquire. Crofton was now alone, and he proposed that they should walk towards their respective homes together.

“Did I not see you go down this walk with another person a few minutes ago ?” said Dacre, as they entered



the avenue down which he had seen him pass with Mr. Harper.

"I have been wandering about for some time, revelling, in the sun," replied Crofton, evasively.

"You were walking I think with Mr. Harper?" continued Dacre.

"With Harper?" rejoined Crofton, hastily. "Do you know Harper?"

"No," replied Dacre, "I believe not; and yet I fancied I had seen him before. Who is he?"

"Heaven knows," said Crofton with a contemptuous smile; "but I don't believe *he* does, and I am sure I don't."

"I hear he has been a great traveller," observed Dacre.

"Yes," replied Crofton, "he has travelled with a good many people, in a good many countries: he is not much of a gentleman, to be sure, but then he is a "character," and that is amusing. Are you going to make any stay at Rome?"

Dacre said his plans were not fixed, and Crofton then inquired after some of their mutual acquaintances, and talked of the deaths and marriages and other events that had taken place since he left England (carefully abstaining from all mention of the death of Lord Kendal, or of Lady Kendal and Emily); and thus the subject of Mr. Harper was entirely superseded.

Crofton called on Dacre the following day, and either by accident or intention they now met frequently. Crofton had lived much in Italy: he was familiar with all the objects most worthy of attention in that country. He was a man of considerable information, and, though his pursuits were degrading, his taste was refined. He could appreciate the beauties of painting, and the graces of sculpture; his imagination was touched by poetry, and his ear for music was correct. Till now Dacre had known but little of him but by reputation: his reputation was not good, and he brought from what he had seen in England, that his countenance and manner bore the stamp of his character.

It is melancholy to think how often the spontaneous agreeableness of an amusing companion is considered sufficient atonement for the deliberate vices of a profligate

man ; and though Dacre's virtuous indignation was undiminished against the gambler whose honour had even been suspected, yet in Crofton's society he forgot to be angry with the individual whose character lay under such an imputation. He could not remember to frown on the man whose sallies had so often called forth a smile. It was pleasant and instructive to be accompanied by Crofton in his morning rambles in search of the beautiful and wonderful ; and Crofton never wounded his sensitiveness by the tone of contemptuous *persiflage* on matters of feeling, which had made him shrink from the thoughts of his society.

"Dacre! will you dine with me to-day?" said Crofton. Dacre had often done so before. Crofton's dinners were always agreeable, and he accepted the invitation. After dinner one or two of the Italian guests sung; and Dacre staid later than usual. Towards the end of the evening, a few men joined the party, and amongst these was Mr. Harper. His eye immediately rested upon Dacre: then walking up to Crofton, he spoke to him in a low voice. Crofton's reply was, "Leave that to me;" and soon afterwards cards and dice appeared. Some played—others betted: Crofton stood by, whilst the different parties arranged themselves, but without taking any part himself; and then turning to Dacre, he said, "Shall we look on? I think you don't play?"

"No," said Dacre, "my play seldom goes beyond a bet."

"Do you like to bet now?" said Crofton. "Name your sum?" Dacre named it. Crofton declared, with a smile, he could not afford to bet so high. The sum was lowered—the bet made—and Crofton won. Another was made, and Dacre won. Other wagers were accepted by both Dacre and Crofton, and then, growing weary of watching the progress of the game on which they had staked their money, Dacre sat down to play at *écarté* with Crofton. The luck was various, but upon the whole Dacre won. Dacre rose to take his leave.

"I wish you would take all these fellows with you," said Crofton, in a whisper, "for I am dead tired to-night."

At that moment Mr. Harper advanced: "Now!" said he, in Crofton's ear. Crofton called Dacre, who had turn-

ed to leave the room, and introduced Mr. Harper to his acquaintance. Mr. Harper looked perfectly at his ease, and immediately entered into conversation with Dacre. Crofton turned away.

"Been long at Rome, sir?" said Mr. Harper, in rather a familiar tone.

Dacre mentioned when he arrived.

"Fine old place, Mr. Dacre!"

Dacre assented, and said he had understood Mr. Harper had been a great traveller.

"Yes, sir! I have travelled as many miles as most men in my time, but I have grown sick of moving about so often, and I mean soon to be settled for life in England."

"Is it long since you were there?" said Dacre, more than ever convinced he recognized his face.

"I left it after the last spring meeting at Newmarket." A few more sentences passed between them, and Dacre retired for the evening.

There was no play at Crofton's house for the few next evenings spent there by Dacre. At length the cards and dice again appeared, and many of the same party appeared to play as before. From Crofton Dacre again won. Harper then engaged him, first in bets, and then in play, and to him he lost. Another evening came, and there were fewer people present, and Dacre lost a more considerable sum to Harper. Dacre had always been peculiarly indifferent to the advantages of wealth; and till now he never had shown the slightest inclination to gamble: but careless of money, and glad to avail himself of any temporary excitement, he found himself in a short time an inconsiderable gainer from Crofton, and a rather considerable loser to Harper.

## CHAPTER XII.

Think not thyself better for anything that happens to thee from without; for although thou mayst, by gifts bestowed upon thee, be better than another, as one horse is better than another, that is, of more use to others; yet, as thou art a man, thou hast nothing to commend thee to thyself but that only by which thou art a man, that is, by what thou choosest and refusest.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

"WHAT a delight it is to get one's English letters!" said Mrs. Ashby, one evening, to Mr. Crofton. "We have had so many to-day.—Cecilia! my dear," continued she in an audible voice, "where is that long, agreeable letter from Lady Whitby?"

The letter was produced, looked over, and a few passages selected for Mr. Crofton's ear.

"Here is a message to you—I had forgotten that," said she. "'Tell Mr. Crofton that we are all very angry at Hexham House being still shut up. He told us he meant to become an English country gentleman, and Lord Whitby is in hopes he will stand for the county. It is such an object to have men of family in Parliament. Our old friend retires after this session, and we are afraid of not being well prepared with a candidate of our own, to stand against those impertinent Bartons: they have been buying all the land they can get in the county; and have actually had the impertinence to extend their property close to Hatton. The eldest son is now of age, and I suppose he is to be brought forward as a genius, because he has (what they call) distinguished himself at Oxford. The idea of a Barton being distinguished! It makes me laugh when I think of their *parvenu* pretensions. The Wentworths and Sir Edward Bradford are come home. Sir Edward was over here the other day: he is now gone to the Duke of Bolton's.'"

Mrs. Ashby read to herself for some way, then muttering, "Maria sends her love to the girls, and believe me, &c. &c." she closed the letter, saying, "That's all I think that may be read out," and looked at Mr. Crofton as if she expected him to be very much impressed with the kindness of Lord and Lady Whitby's intention to drag him into the honours of a contested election.

"I have already promised Barton all the interest I possess," said Crofton, very coolly.

Mrs. Ashby laughed.

"There is no making you serious," said she; "Lady Whitby will be so amused at the idea of your supporting those shocking people."

Crofton smiled.

"It is a very original idea I have no doubt," said he, "as it strikes you as such; but I am afraid the majority of the —shire electors have got the same original idea in their heads, and mean to act upon it the first opportunity."

Mrs. Ashby was a little alarmed lest she should have offended Mr. Crofton, but still more alarmed at the possibility that he should really mean to support the interest of Mr. Barton, when Lady Whitby had always said that not a gentleman in the county would think of so debasing himself. "What can you mean, Mr. Crofton?" said she; "you are not in earnest, I am sure?"

"I am sure," replied Crofton, "that I never was more in earnest in my life. Nothing on earth can interest me less than who is in or out of Parliament; but as Mr. Barton accommodated me in an arrangement I wished to make, I volunteered to assist him in any way that would forward his wishes without giving me trouble!"

"That was very kind of you," said Mrs. Ashby with a friendly smile, "but perhaps it was not a binding sort of promise; dear Lady Whitby will be so distressed to have her proposal refused at once. May I tell her you will think about it?"

"By all means!" replied Crofton, "you can say if you please that I *have* thought about it."

"That's very amiable of you," said Mrs. Ashby, and she rose to receive some guests who had just entered. Perhaps she would have thought him less amiable if she had

read the contemptuous curl of his lip, which accompanied his words.

"Crofton!" said Dacre, as they were walking together the following morning, "was not Mrs. Ashby reading you a letter from Lady Whitby last night?"

"Yes!" replied Crofton; "did you not hear its contents?"

"Not exactly," replied Dacre; "I thought I heard something about Barton and the county; but I could not hear distinctly."

"True," replied Crofton; "I remember Miss Ashby had got possession of your ear, if not of your attention. So you did not hear Lady Whitby's magnificent offer, of allowing me to fight the cause of her county jealousies, with my time, trouble and purse." He then repeated to Dacre Lady Whitby's message on the subject.

"It is a strange arrogant set, this aristocracy of ours!" continued Crofton. "Now Lord Whitby is just one of those weak men, who is sure to mistake the possession of power for the fitness to use it."

"I am afraid," said Dacre, "there is a strong tendency in human nature to reverse the well-known dictum, and assume that power is knowledge; but I do not think that such an assumption is peculiar to the English aristocracy."

"Faith! I don't know," rejoined Crofton; "I have lived long enough out of England to view it *en citoyen du monde*, and to learn to despise the hollow pretensions to wisdom and virtue of those who are deemed the first in our land. I know that their wisdom is founded on presumption, their virtue in severity to the unfortunate, and kindness to the prosperous. I have bought my opinions by personal experience."

"You are somewhat sweeping, Crofton, in your condemnation," said Dacre, rather surprised at the unusual energy and seeming bitterness with which he had spoken.

"Perhaps so," replied Crofton, "but it is not the less just. You will agree with me in time."

"I think not!" said Dacre. "Had I allowed my opinions to be guided by my feelings, there is no evil I might not have attributed to the institutions of a country, from

which I have gathered such a harvest of mortification ; but I felt the baneful influence of personal feelings, and I hope I have escaped the danger."

"And so," rejoined Crofton, "you have become partial, from the fear of being unjust."

"No man is aware of his own partialities," replied Dacre : "but do not suppose that I have been blind to the insolence of wealth, the abuse of power, the pride of birth, the frivolity of fashion, and the meanness of its votaries. I have seen all this in England, I have seen it in all classes, modified only according to circumstances : and I know that I shall see it in all countries, for vices and failings like these are inherent in man."

"Upon my life !" said Crofton, relaxing into his more usual tone, "such doctrines are enough to destroy the hopes of the purest philanthropist ; but never mind," continued he, in his half humorous, half ironical tone, "it won't affect me, for my young enthusiasm upon every subject died a natural death before I was twenty. It is only the ghost that rises within me sometimes." Dacre smiled. "But," said Crofton, reassuming the serious tone, "how can you uphold a system of society, to the faults of which your eyes are so open ?"

"Because," replied Dacre, "I believe the advantages outweigh the faults. I am far from thinking that our social system is perfect. I do not even say that it might not be improved ; but I think its advantages are its own, whilst the majority of its evils, arising in the frailty of our nature, would be found to disfigure any institution that springs from man."

"Undoubtedly one of the advantages it can claim for its own," said Crofton, ironically, "is the production of such men as Lord Whitby ; without the law of primogeniture, men like him could not be found."

"There are some," said Dacre, "who may serve rather to show the abuse than the use of hereditary honour. Now I would quote the Duke of Bolton as an instance of the latter ; moreover," continued he, "I think we have no more right to say that a system is bad, because it is ill executed, than to condemn a play, because the actors have failed."

"Nor," rejoined Crofton, "to uphold the play, be-

cause a great genius has made it popular, in spite of its deficiencies."

"Certainly not," replied Dacre; "extremes should never be cited as examples; but in Lord Whitby you did not select a fool, and in the Duke of Bolton I have not named a genius; and if, in one, may be seen the ignorance which springs from luxurious idleness, in the other we profit by the cultivation resulting from undisturbed leisure."

"Then," said Crofton, "you allow that your actors want teaching, to do justice to their parts: but who will be their schoolmaster?"

"That which is the schoolmaster of England, 'Public Opinion'; and the more education is extended, the more will be expected of those who stand highest."

"The expectation will be disappointed!" said Crofton contemptuously.

"I think not," said Dacre. "Remember we have not only an aristocracy of birth and of wealth, but of merit; and those who enjoy but the knowledge of power must yield to the power of knowledge."

"Not whilst hereditary honours give the right to distinction and ease without labour," observed Crofton.

"Yet, after all," said Dacre, "the institution of an aristocracy is founded upon the principle of division of labour. They are the holders of capital—they are—"

"Stop, stop, my dear fellow," said Crofton, with an air of affected fatigue; "you are going to give me the first chapter on Political Economy. Who ever thought of profaning the groves of a villa at Rome with such words as 'division of labour,' and 'holder of capital!' Dacre!" continued he, again looking serious, "I may not agree with you; but I admire you. I respect you for your opinions; for you would uphold the institutions from which you have suffered. I am not so noble. No! I have been the victim through life of our accursed laws of inheritance, and I abhor them."

Dacre looked surprised. He had never heard Crofton speak so seriously or so bitterly before, and he did not understand to what he alluded.

"When I was young," continued he, "and could have enjoyed my life, I was checked in every wish, and blighted in every hope, by poverty. I loved, and was loved in re-



turn ; but I had a younger brother's pittance, and marriage was regarded as a sin. Had I then married, I might, perhaps, have led a better and a happier life." He paused for a moment. "It is too late in the day to be sentimental now !" said he, in his more accustomed tone ; "but poverty never teaches prudence, you know, or, if she does, she must have found me a bad pupil ; for I never could learn that lesson ; and so I was what others call extravagant, and what I call unfortunate. Fortune came too late. My brother died ; but my rascally creditors had forestalled the pecuniary advantages of that event, and then"—he hesitated.

"You succeeded to Lord Hexham's property," said Dacre, who saw the delicacy which checked the completion of his sentence.

"Yes," replied Crofton ; "thanks to the same unnatural law which deprived me of competency in my youth, I became heir to the property that should not have been mine. Dacre ! I wish I had never known you—still more that I had never liked you : it is bad enough to be a robber ; but to be the robber of one's friend is still worse." Crofton spoke with apparent agitation.

"Do not think of me," said Dacre ; "I feel your kindness, Crofton ! but the riches of Cræsus could not make me happy." Crofton made no reply. They had now returned to the streets, and they walked on together for some little distance in silence. Both seemed absorbed in the thoughts to which this conversation had given rise ; but they were aroused from their reverie by the approach of Mr. Harper. He accosted them, and after making a few common-place observations on the day, he turned to Crofton, saying,—

"I should be glad to speak a few words with you, Mr. Crofton."

"When ?" asked Crofton, in a tone that showed no great inclination for the conference proposed.

"The sooner the better," replied Harper ; "now, if you are disengaged."

Crofton made him no answer, but he withdrew his arm from Dacre's, saying, "Dacre, we shall meet at dinner. *Au revoir !*" Harper's proffered arm was accepted ; they turned together down a narrow street, and left Dacre to

wonder what circumstances could have produced between them so much intimacy with so little friendship.

Crofton had sometimes talked of Harper's peculiar manner, and of the amusement to be derived from the study of odd characters; but still, when they were together, there seemed no cordiality in his manner toward him, and no pleasure in his society. He had heard them once discussing with some interest the news that had arrived of the fate of a race. Possibly they might be confederates on the Turf.

### CHAPTER XIII.

Vouloir oublier quelqu'un c'est y penser. L'amour a cela de commun avec les scrupules, qu'il s'aigrit par les réflexions et les retours que l'on fait pour s'en délivrer. Il faut, s'il se peut, ne point songer à sa passion pour l'affaiblir.

LA BRUYÈRE.

A LONGER time than usual had elapsed since Dacre had heard from Harry Molesworth. He knew that the friendship which had commenced between Lady Emily and Mary, though begun by his means had not been interrupted by that mysterious cause which had driven him for ever from her presence. Molesworth had written him word that Lady Kendal had proposed that Mary should pass the few days with them at Oakley Park, in which Harry was obliged to leave her to attend a court-martial. Dacre had hoped, ere this, to have received some account from Harry of his wife's visit. He knew that his friend was not likely to delay writing on a subject so deeply interesting to his feelings; and, though every hope had long withered in his breast, the idea that Molesworth had been withheld by his reluctance to make some painful communication with respect to Lady Emily had taken forcible possession of his

mind, and ever increased his usual depression. But a note of kind reproaches from Mrs. Ashby for what she termed Dacre's "shameful desertion of late," obliged him again to join one of those parties, from which he derived so little amusement.

That evening dancing was proposed—dancing, as Mrs. Ashby said, "just in a quiet way," which meant, that one of the company should be offered up as a sacrifice to the pleasure of others; and that the best-natured lady in the room was to play the fiddler's part, without the fiddler's wages. Dacre shrank from the sight and sound of gaiety, for which his present state of spirits peculiarly unfitted him; and, retiring to the room where cards were, as usual, going on, he proposed to Crofton to play.

"Mr. Dacre," said Harper, when the game was over, "you shall give me my revenge to-night; you won last, I think."

Whether Dacre was more than ordinarily pre-occupied, or his adversaries more than ordinarily fortunate or skilful, might be doubtful—but Dacre was the loser; he had lost more to Crofton than he had ever lost before, and he was shocked to find how large a sum he had also lost to Harper. Till then he had never played so high, and he retired to his room that night dissatisfied with himself for having allowed the pastime suggested by *ennui* to so nearly approach the more determined vice of gambling. These thoughts indisposed him to rest: it was not late, and to occupy himself he tried to read; but he found it difficult to fix his attention to the book, and he began a letter to Harry Molesworth.

He had not been long thus engaged, when he was startled by a knock at his door, and Crofton entered. He seated himself, said something of the insufferable heat and bore of Mrs. Ashby's parties, vowed neither angel or devil should tempt him there again, took out his splendid snuff-box, and then paused for awhile. Dacre thought him more excited than usual in manner, and the suspicion crossed his mind, that he was a little heated by wine.

"Dacre," said he, after a few moments' silence; and again the snuff-box was tapped, and opened, and put down on the table;—"Dacre, you will think me a deuced odd

fellow for what I am about to say ; but for once in my life I am going to turn Mentor." Dacre looked surprised. Crofton gave a forced laugh. "It is amusing, I own, to think of me in that capacity, but, by the immortal gods, it's true ; and so, to the point," continued he in a different tone: "let me ask you one question—is not the love of play in you a newly acquired taste?"

"Newly acquired it certainly is," replied Dacre, "but I will hardly call it yet a taste."

"Then beware," said he, with greater earnestness—"beware that it does not become so. I do not wish to force myself into your confidence, but from what I have heard, and from an expression used by yourself the other day, I fear you have had too much cause for unhappiness."

"You are right in your conjecture," said Dacre.

"Then," rejoined Crofton, "take warning : take warning from one"—he hesitated a moment—"from one who has lived longer, and seen more of life than you have yet done. You seek forgetfulness, but you will only add to your memory fresh cause of regret."

"I believe you are right," said Dacre. "No man can purchase peace at the expense of his conscience."

"Perhaps not," said Crofton, "but that was not all I meant ; you should remember that in the attempt to solace yourself for the vexations of delay, you may lose for ever the object in view." Dacre did not understand his meaning. "Is it not very possible," continued Crofton, "that she who is now withheld from you by others may become willing to relinquish you herself?"

"Crofton, you are under some mistake," replied Dacre, "in supposing that any change is ever likely to be effected in my condition. Lady Emily Somers has been the arbitress of her own fate."

Crofton seemed surprised. "I thought it had been otherwise," said he.

"I did not know," rejoined Dacre, "that the report of our probable marriage had ever reached your ear. Tell me what you have heard upon the subject, and I will tell you in return, how far you have been rightly informed. I cannot wish that you, who have just shown so much interest in my behalf, should be ignorant of the facts that have probably determined the fate of my life."

“ Crofton then told him all he had heard ; and when Dacre had listened to this somewhat garbled version of the matter, which rumour had sent forth, he confided to Crofton the real state of the case.

There was nothing in Crofton's manner of receiving his confidence, to remind him of that heartless indifference, which had hitherto indisposed him to allude to the subject, which was for ever present to his mind ; on the contrary, he appeared to enter seriously and considerately into his feelings ; and Dacre found that in the quickness he displayed in at once comprehending his meaning, he was spared the task of becoming explicit on a topic, on which, to have dwelt with minuteness, would have been peculiarly painful. It was long since he had spoken of Emily ; and perhaps the relief of giving vent to his pent up feelings was greater than he was aware, and gave additional value to the manner in which Crofton received his confidence ; and perhaps he felt, also, that he had hitherto done him injustice. The result was such as might have been expected : a revolution in favour of Crofton was worked in his mind by this interview. He knew that Crofton had faults ; he knew that the world had taught him to speak lightly of the virtues and feelings it had weakened or destroyed. “ But, after all,” said he to himself, as Crofton closed the door—“ after all, he is a noble-minded fellow : he has a heart ; he can feel for others ; his coldness is only towards himself.”

From this time the intercourse between Dacre and Crofton became considerably more frequent ; and Dacre began to wonder that he should ever have been so averse to the acquaintance of one, in whose society he now felt his pleasure was daily increasing. Dacre did not play again. Indeed, though far from insensible to the friendship which Crofton had testified by his interference on that subject, the rectitude of his own mind would have checked the continuance of a pursuit which he could not, and did not, approve. But though he ceased to play, and though he ceased to meet Mr. Harper so often as before at Crofton's house, yet whenever they did meet, Harper seemed anxious to become better acquainted with him. The letter to Harry Molesworth, which Crofton's visit had interrupted, was postponed ; for upon second thoughts he determined again

to await the arrival of letters from England, before he wrote to inquire the cause of his silence.

The arrival of letters from home is always a moment of excitement to those who are travelling abroad. It recalls us at once to all we have left—to the cares we would forget, the sorrows we would efface, the joys that are passed. The messenger is expected with feverish impatience, and yet we tremble to read the tidings he brings. The letters are placed in our hands; and quicker than thought the directions are looked at, the hand-writings are recognized, and we glance at the seals to descry if any have come on a message of death.

Some are sure to tell of change; and the change will startle, when its progress is unseen. Perhaps we read that friends will join us in our pilgrimage abroad, their fortunes broken, or their health impaired. We hear the men we left in power have ceased to rule. The splendid mansion where we danced and feasted is now the prey of creditors who once decked it so richly for pleasure. The house that wept a father's death now lights its halls in honour of the heir. The giddy flirt has pledged her troth—the reckless youth has learnt a husband's fondness, and a father's care—the widow wears again the bridal robe—the laughing girl we saw so full of life now droops beneath the blight of pale consumption—the child who frolicked at our parting is cold and stiff within its early grave. The afflictions we grieved for have ceased to afflict, and the joy we rejoiced at is turned into sorrow. Yes! we read of such changes in those with whose image we have long been familiar: we marked them not when we were near, but, when removed to a distance, they show us the progress of life.

How sadly this progress is watched by the mind which is dead to all changes, and stands still in its grief! How dispiriting to see the healing powers of time in others close the wounds of sharp affliction, and yet to feel it has not plucked from out the heart the deep canker of disappointment! Dacre had made no progress towards emancipation from the thralldom of his feelings. He for ever bore about him the consciousness of a well-grounded attachment, of undiminished love and blighted hopes.

The post-day was come, and Dacre looked with impatience for the long expected letter from his friend. Other letters were placed in his hand, but from Harry Molesworth there was none. He pondered over the contents of those he had received, and then, sauntering out, he gave himself up to gloomy speculations on the cause of his silence. He had not, however, proceeded far, when he was accosted by his servant. The man had been to the post-office on some errand of his own; and Dacre having asked him if he was sure there had been no other letter for him, he took the opportunity of being there, to make the same inquiry at the office. A letter had been overlooked—the letter, which of all others Dacre most cared to receive; and his eye glanced hastily over the paper, to see if his fears were about to be realized.

Mary had been ill,—ill at Oakley Park; Harry had been sent for there. He had himself been staying with Lady Kendal and Emily, and he could now fulfil his parting promise, to tell Dacre of her spirits, her mind, her health, her employments. Her spirits were even, though she never was gay: her colour had fled, and the languor of sickness had crept over her frame, and tinged her expression of countenance; yet her beauty was uninjured, and her health was improving. Her time was occupied in devoted attentions to her mother—in promoting the instruction and amusement of her brother, then at home for the holydays,—in reading, and in works of charity. Harry named the books in which he had heard from Mary that she had found most pleasure, and also certain plans and regulations for the benefit of the poor, in which she had occupied herself with great zeal. Dacre knew that the books were those which he had recommended her to read; and the charities alluded to, were those, of which he had given her the plans in writing, on the night of their parting at Hatton.

Lady Emily had talked of her father to Mary—of all she had suffered at the time of his death; but of Dacre no mention had been made. She had seemed to shrink from any possible allusion to that subject: she had even said to Mary, “There are sorrows which wean us from life, and point to the grave; but of those we should never speak,

for we must struggle not to follow too quickly where they would lead."

Dacre was greatly affected at these proofs of unaltered attachment on her part: "She loves me still!" said he to himself, and his heart glowed with the thought. "This spell shall then be broken! why is the power we bear over each other to endure but for our misery? The gift of pure happiness seems in our hands; why are we thus to refuse its enjoyment?" and he quickened his step, and it seemed as if his mind was made up to some determined resolve.

The excitement of the subject on which his thoughts now dwelt had carried him further in his walk than he was aware, till his attention was arrested by the beauty of the surrounding scenery. He had mounted on a height which commanded a view of the town and *campagna*; and, seating himself on the rising bank, he gazed upon the scene before him. It was sunset, and Dacre thought upon the ride, when he had discussed with Emily those subjects to which Harry had alluded in his letter. Then, too, the day had been drawing to a close; that same eternal sun had been setting, when she had said to him, "There will be no sunshine to-morrow." That sunset had told how homely joys and peaceful pleasures pass away; but now the heavens glowed and blazed in one vast sheet of golden conflagration, and it told of kingdoms lost and empires past away. Dacre looked upon the city from which its brightness had fled, and he saw in the pile that rose dark and distinct to his view, the records of ages gone by.

There is sadness in the sight of cities that outlive their fame. They seem not as the dwellings of the present, but as the sepulchres of ancient days, where lie entombed the annals of the past. On the mountain we forget the existence of man, but here we remember how oft he has died. In the solitude of nature, the power of time seems to lessen, whilst here he lays waste all before him. Yet both alike will point beyond this earth: in one we see the type of life eternal; and from the gloom which desolation and decay create springs the strong and ardent hope of immortality. These are the thoughts which crush the



soul's rebellion to the woes of life, and raise from the ashes of despair a hope of happiness in store.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Ev'ry man in this age has not a soul  
Of crystal for all men to read their actions  
Through ; men's hearts and faces are so far asunder,  
That they hold no intelligence.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

DACRE now bent homeward his steps, more composed and resigned to his lot than when he ascended that hill. He thought on all the struggles of the pure and gentle being, whose joyous youth was wrecked upon the hidden shoal, where his was also lost ; and the flush of shame passed over him, to think that the meekness of woman can support, where the spirit of man is bowed down. Dacre walked musingly on, and, engrossed with the subject of his own reflections, he was startled at hearing his name pronounced, as he regained the precincts of the town ; he looked round, and saw that Harper was just behind him. Dacre stopped : they were both returning home in the same direction, and Harper proposed they should walk back together. Dacre could not refuse, though but little inclined to conversation.

"Have you seen Crofton to day ?" said Dacre, by way of a topic. Harper said he had not seen Mr. Crofton for some days.

"You have long been acquainted with him, I believe ?" said Dacre, who was not without curiosity on the subject of their seeming intimacy.

"Longer, I believe, Mr. Dacre, than you have," replied Harper, with some emphasis.

"If acquaintance was measured by time, mine with

Crofton would be still rather slight," observed Dacre ; " but circumstances seem to have favoured our intimacy."

" Circumstances always favour Mr. Crofton," said Harper, drily.

" Indeed !" rejoined Dacre ; " he is not inclined to think himself fortunate."

" Then he don't deserve his good fortune," said Harper.

" But," replied Dacre, good-humouredly, " I am not so vain as to expect that Crofton should regard his friendship with me as any piece of good fortune."

Harper was silent.

" Crofton is remarkably agreeable," said Dacre, who was inclined to continue the subject.

" So I have heard from better judges in those matters than me," said Harper ; " we always have business to talk upon, and Mr. Crofton is not one who wastes his words on those who he thinks can do without them."

Dacre thought he was piqued by some slight on Crofton's part, and said no more : the conversation took another turn, and Harper asked if he had left England soon after Captain Molesworth's marriage. Dacre mentioned the month in which he had quitted England, and then inquired if he was acquainted with Captain Molesworth.

" I have seen him," replied Harper, and I believe I know him by sight, though I mistook you for him."

" Indeed !" exclaimed Dacre ; " then I think you cannot remember him, for never were two people more unlike each other."

" Very true," said Harper, " but the mistake was not mine."

" How so ?" rejoined Dacre..

" Why for that matter," replied Harper, " your friend Mr. Crofton can tell you better than I : it was he who told me you were Captain Molesworth."

" You must have misunderstood him," said Dacre.

" No, no !" replied Harper, shaking his head ; " trust me for making a mistake, when I want to know a thing. This is not the first time we have met, Mr. Dacre ; the first time I saw you was at the play."

Dacre looked at him. " Were you there with Crofton ?" said he.

Harper said "Yes!" and named the theatre, and the time at which they had met.

Dacre recognised in Harper the man who had so often turned his eyes towards him when at the play with Harry Molesworth.

Harper continued. "Well, Mr. Dacre! I thought I caught your name, and I looked at you, and I fancied it was you, and I had a fancy to know if it was, and I asked Mr. Crofton your name: he told me you were Captain Molesworth, and when I asked the name of your companion, he said he did not know."

"Perhaps he mistook the direction in which you pointed," said Dacre; who, however, remembered perfectly having overheard the very answers which Harper now repeated."

"I know there was no mistake in the matter," said Harper.

"It is impossible," replied Dacre, "that Crofton could have intentionally misled you upon so unimportant a subject."

"Mr. Crofton has his own reasons, no doubt!" said he, with a coarse, contemptuous smile.

Dacre made no reply. He saw that Harper was from some cause irritated against Crofton; he felt no wish to prolong the topic, and their walk soon came to a close. It certainly seemed strange to Dacre that Crofton should have endeavoured to deceive Harper as to who he was; and for awhile he debated with himself on the possible causes of this petty deceit: but it seemed ungenerous to indulge in surmises on the motives of one who had treated him with such openness and candour, and he dismissed the subject from his mind, till he could ask of Crofton an explanation of this trifling mystery. An opportunity soon offered; and as they sat together one evening, Dacre told Crofton that he had discovered where it was he had seen Harper before.

"His face always perplexed me," said Dacre, "till he reminded me the other day that he was at the play with you on the night we met there."

Crofton gave one of his forced, affected smiles, as he said, "Has the vulgar fellow been boasting of having gone to the play with me?"

"There was no boasting in the matter," replied Dacre, rather gravely. "He only recalled to my mind what at the time had made some impression on me."

Crofton said nothing; leant back in his chair, had recourse to his snuff-box, and then offered it to Dacre.

"Why Harper should have been interested in knowing who I was, I don't know," said Dacre; "but I remember he constantly fixed his eyes upon me that evening."

"I dare say he did," interrupted Crofton; "for he is deuced ill-bred sometimes."

"And I believe," continued Dacre, "that he asked you my name."

"Very likely," continued Crofton, "for he is curiosity itself; and what if he did?"

"Can you remember what answer you made him," inquired Dacre.

"It might not be safe to trust my memory on such a subject," said Crofton, in a tone of *persiflage*; "but if you are collecting curious questions and answers, I dare say I can make an extract from my journal for you."

Dacre smiled. "To say the truth," rejoined he, "I believe, though the question was simple, your answer was curious. Crofton," continued he, seriously, "I wish you would tell me why you misled Harper as to my name."

"Did he tell you that I had misled him?" asked Crofton, hastily.

"Yes," replied Dacre; "and I know that you did so; for I overheard Harper's question and your answer: I heard you tell him that I was Captain Molesworth; and when he pointed out Molesworth, you said you did not know him. I thought it strange at the time; but thinking I might have been mistaken, I dismissed it from my mind; but Harper has recalled it by repeating to me what had passed."

Crofton did not answer immediately. "His impertinence knows no bounds," muttered he; and for a moment there was a change in his countenance.

"Crofton," said Dacre, "your seeming intimacy with Harper has, I own, excited my surprise; and though I have no right to ask of you what you may not wish to tell me, yet as my own name is now in question, I am

certainly anxious to know why you should have made me pass for another to him."

"To save you from his acquaintance," said Crofton, with some agitation. "Dacre, since you press me on the subject, I will confess to you that I did not wish you to become acquainted with Harper; and I knew that he would have desired to be introduced to you, had I told him your name."

"What interest could he have felt in me?" inquired Dacre.

"The interest that a gambler will feel in those who are young and rich."

"What should have led him to suppose that I had money?"

"A shilling at Doctors' Commons could give the rascal that information," said Crofton; "and he has time and wit to discover the fortune and estate of every idle man in town."

"Your motive was one of kindness to me; and yet," continued Dacre, looking earnestly at him, "you have lived in seeming intimacy with this man, from whose acquaintance you wished to save me."

"Yes," replied Crofton, "in *seeming* intimacy; and even that is disagreeable to me."

"Surely," observed Dacre, "you can have no difficulty in throwing off one whose society is displeasing to you."

"There are follies in life which bring their own punishment," said Crofton; "and my acquaintance with this man was the result of circumstances I did not wish should come to your knowledge."

"Why should you have feared?" said Dacre.

"I thought you would probably be prejudiced against me: report had made me like you, and I did not wish to appear as the companion of an adventurer or a gambler. You could not know that it was my misfortune, not my fault, that brought me into contact with such a man; and," continued he, with a sarcastic smile, "my virtue shall now rid me of him."

Dacre begged he would explain.

"It was play brought us together; but I have abjured the tedious pastime of losing my own money to win other

people's, and the riddance of that vulgar, swaggering fellow shall be virtue's own reward."

"His manners are certainly coarse and disagreeable," replied Dacre: "but he cannot help that; and as you have been long acquainted with him, it would be hurting his feelings unnecessarily if you were to avoid him very pointedly."

"His deserts will be equal to his merits," said Crofton, bitterly; "a man like him is not often pained by his own sensitiveness."

"I suspect, however," rejoined Dacre, "that Harper is not so devoid of that feeling as you suppose; and I cannot help thinking that some change of manner on your part has wounded him."

"Spare your pity," said Crofton; "Harper won't die of his sensibility."

"Perhaps not," rejoined Dacre; "but if you only object to his presence now, on the score of the want of refinement which he never has had, it will seem capricious to repulse him without any fresh ground of complaint."

"He knows better than to call me capricious," said Crofton.

"I think he is piqued by your avoidance of him," observed Dacre.

"Did the impudent scoundrel presume to abuse me to you?" asked Crofton, in rather an angry tone.

"No," replied Dacre, "he did not abuse you; and if he had, do not suppose that I should be so treacherous as to repeat to you any conversation that was not meant for your ear."

A pause ensued.

"Dacre," said Crofton, "there is no use in concealing the truth from you. If I do not tell you the truth, this Harper may impose some lie upon you; as to the cause of my conduct towards him. *You* are the cause of my peculiar hatred to this man."

"How so?" exclaimed Dacre, eagerly.

"Before I say another word, I must exact from you some pledge, that to him you will take no notice of what I am about to tell you."

"I will pledge you my word of honour, that whatever

you tell me in confidence shall be regarded as such by me," replied Dacre.

"You remember," said Crofton, "that you lost at Mrs. Ashby's a larger sum of money than you ever staked before. I watched the progress of that game. Harper won it." He paused. "A man of honour could not have won it," said he, and his look and emphasis explained the meaning he would convey.

Dacre's confidence in Crofton was confirmed, and he shrunk from all further intercourse with Harper.

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## CHAPTER XV.

Hence disappointment lurks in every page,  
As bees in flowers.

YOUNG.

TIME wore on; and Mrs. Ashby was beginning to grow uneasy at the little progress that had been made in the flirtation she had wished to establish between Dacre and her eldest daughter. She most unjustly reproached herself with a want of activity in behalf of her children. She was sure that Lady Margaret Sheffield had done her duty as a mother so much better than herself. She had married off three, out of her five ugly girls—girls that nobody would have taken to, if their mother had not put it into the heads of those men to marry them. To be sure, it would go against one at first to do the things that Lady Margaret did: but then it really was a duty in a mother to exert herself, and Lady Margaret was right; and Mrs. Ashby determined to be more active—and Dacre was pressed into the service of an expedition to Tivoli.

The day was fixed; and it was arranged that the whole party should sleep there at the inn for one night, and return on the morrow. The day arrived—the weather

seemed propitious—the Miss Ashbys were decked out in their newest bonnets, and their prettiest gowns : a *demi toilette* was safely packed for them to wear, and look well in the evening ; and the two smart men with whom Cecilia had coquetted herself into a flirtation arrived to accompany them. Miss Ashby was in her very best looks ; and as Dacre handed her down to the carriage, Mrs. Ashby gave a smile of maternal content, for she felt sure he must admire her, and that all would go well. With the help of the dickey the carriage could well hold six ; and some said what an agreeable day they should have ; and all but Dacre, perhaps, really thought it would be a party of pleasure.

The walls of Rome were past ; and now they looked upon the low and broken aqueducts that stretched their ruined arches far across the plain.

Miss Ashby raised her glass to her eye, and said to Dacre, in a sentimental tone, “ What splendid corridors these may once have been ! ” The two young men declared that nobody knew the *fun of Rome* who had not been snipe-shooting. One declared he had never had a better day’s sport since he left Cambridge ; and the other vowed he had half a mind to run up a shooting box down in the marshes ; and Cecilia laughed at the notion, and promised they would all go and see him in his new house. Mrs. Ashby looked at Dacre, just to see if he thought Cecilia foolish. She saw that Dacre was listening to her eldest daughter, and then she smiled at her ease with Cecilia and her hero, and was sure that all was going on well.

In time, one of the sportsmen, however, became more and more silent. He turned very pale, and complained of the cold, when others were fearing the heat of the sun. Miss Cecilia treated his complaint as a joke ; threw him her shawl, and said it was so droll of him to be chilly—and on they drove. The smell of sulphur, that rises from the stream they were approaching, grew stronger and stronger. Miss Ashby took her highly-scented handkerchief from her best embroidered bag, looked at Dacre, and said, “ How unpleasant ! ” Cecilia laughed, and said she “ quite liked the smell, it was a dear smell—it seemed so nice and ancient ” and Mrs. Ashby felt how charmingly her daughters’ tastes contrasted with each other.

Meanwhile the sickness of approaching fever seemed



fast increasing on the gentleman who had complained of cold : the blood looked stagnant on his cheek, his eye was dim and heavy, his lips were black, and there was the drawn expression on his face which tells of coming illness.

"Fitzgerald, I am sure you are ill," said Dacre, who caught sight of his countenance.

"I believe I am," he replied ; and his teeth chattered as he spoke.

"Oh dear how sorry I am !" said Mrs. Ashby, with a compassionate smile. "Perhaps the sulphureous smell affects you ; you will be better when we have passed the stream."

"It is enough to make any one ill," observed Julia, in a languid voice.

Poor Fitzgerald knew the smell had nothing to do with his ailments, but had not the energy to contradict their view of his case. Cecilia looked concerned, for she was rather a good-natured girl, and Fitzgerald was her favourite admirer of the moment.

"How long have you been ill?" inquired she.

He owned he had felt unwell the day before, and had got up with a headache : but he trusted a party of pleasure would cure the headache ; and a cordial draught had made him warm, so he had thought himself quite well when he set out.

"You will be obliged to go to bed as soon as we get to Tivoli," said Miss Ashby, with great philosophy, for Fitzgerald did not interest her..

"You must let me nurse you, and doctor you there, as I am the old woman of the party," said Mrs. Ashby, with a look of maternal benignity.

"Thank you," said Fitzgerald : "I dare say I shall be quite well to-morrow;" and he shivered violently as he spoke.

"Had we not better stop a moment?" said Dacre, who thought the motion of the carriage might increase the shivering fit.

"By all means," replied Mrs. Ashby. Dacre felt his pulse : his impression was confirmed that the poor young man was seriously ill. He took off his own cloak, and threw it over him, though Miss Ashby reproached him,

*sotto voce*, for such imprudence, while Cecilia and Mrs. Ashby hunted in their reticles for salts, and *eau de Cologne* to cure the ague.

"I am so afraid you won't be comfortable at Tivoli," said Cecilia: "I wish we had not come to-day."

Mrs. and Miss Ashby said nothing; but Dacre took advantage of this opening to propose they should return. Fitzgerald was shocked at the idea of returning on his account, and begged they would go on. Dacre looked at Cecilia to second his proposal, and she declared she had no wish to go to Tivoli. Mrs. Ashby was dreadfully perplexed: she was very sorry for Mr. Fitzgerald, and for Cecilia; but then it seemed so hard upon Julia to give up the party when Dacre was with them, and things seemed prosperous, or at any rate might become so at Tivoli.

"By Jove, Fitzgerald, you are in for it," said the sporting friend, turning his head from the box in front into the carriage: "I suppose it will be my turn next: what odds will you take that I have caught it?"

Mrs. Ashby turned pale: "I think, Mr. Dacre, if none of the party would very much object, that we had better turn about, and get back to Rome as soon as possible; I am sure it will be better for Mr. Fitzgerald, and we shall none of us enjoy the trip when he is suffering." Cecilia and Dacre joyfully acquiesced—Miss Ashby looked resigned, and said in a voice that was meant for Dacre's ear alone,—"I believe you are right."

"Julia, keep your handkerchief to your mouth," whispered Mrs. Ashby in her daughter's ear: "he has got the malaria, and it is dreadfully infectious;" and then watched her opportunity to impart the same advice and information to Cecilia.

"I don't believe, mamma, it is infectious," whispered Cecilia, who did not like to be deprived of the pleasure of talking to Mr. Fitzgerald, as much as she could, all the way home.

"My dear," rejoined Mrs. Ashby, "I am quite of Lady Whitby's opinion, that every complaint is infectious, though some people don't happen to catch it. We shall consider our party for dinner holds good; so neither you nor Mr. Dacre must desert us," said Mrs. Ashby, addressing herself to the gentlemen outside. They both declared their

willingness to accept the invitation ; " and," continued Mrs. Ashby, looking at Dacre, " supposing, as we cannot have the pleasure of Mr. Fitzgerald's company, you ask Mr. Crofton to come and join us, if he will excuse our want of preparation—you know how happy we always are to see him." Dacre promised to be the bearer of her message. " He is a great friend of yours, I think," said Mrs. Ashby. Dacre said he was. " He is so intellectual!" observed Mrs. Ashby, with a very sensible face.

" It is quite refreshing to hear him on the fine arts," said Miss Ashby, who had lately discovered the necessity, at Rome, of being a little pedantic.

" You and Mr. Crofton have made quite an alliance on that subject lately," remarked Mrs. Ashby, with an approving look at her daughter. " By the by, he wants Julia to sit to —— for her bust. Do you think he would succeed? We think of his beginning next week. I know, Mr. Dacre, that you are a great connoisseur, so you must come and criticise for us."

The carriage now stopped : Fitzgerald was deposited at his lodgings : Dacre and the other gentlemen assisted him to his room : the physician was sent for, and the malady pronounced to be an aggravated case of ague, contracted in the marshes. Nothing more could be done for the patient ; and Dacre walked to Crofton's house to deliver Mrs. Ashby's invitation to dinner.

## CHAPTER XVI.

O you gods! think I, what need we have any friends, if we should never have need of them? they were the most needless creatures living, should we never have use of them; and would most resemble sweet instruments hung up in cases, that keep their sounds to themselves.

*Timon of Athens.*

DACRE mounted the stairs that led to Crofton's apartment: the servant who usually waited in the anteroom was not there. Dacre heard voices within, and without further ceremony entered. Crofton was standing with his arm leaning on the chimney-piece, and his back to the door. Near the table sat a man, with his legs resting on the seat of a neighbouring chair, and with an air of perfect ease, not to say vulgarity. Crofton turned his head on hearing the door open; and his countenance bore the air of extreme displeasure at this unexpected intrusion." Dacre! is it you?" he exclaimed; and his expression relaxed into one of surprise. The visitor turned his head, and Dacre saw that it was Harper.

"I thought you were gone to Tivoli," said Crofton: Dacre explained the cause of his return, and delivered Mrs. Ashby's message.

Crofton smiled ironically. "Sake's sake!" said he, in an under tone to Dacre: "shall you be there?" Dacre said he should. "Then I will go. Shall I send a note to say 'yes?'"

Dacre thought he had better do so. Crofton wrote the note; and whilst he was thus occupied, a little commonplace conversation took place between Dacre and Harper. Dacre waited in hopes that he would go; but he showed no inclination to move: conversation flagged; and it was evident that Harper was determined to outstay him.

Crofton came to dinner. He was particularly agreeable; and Mrs. Ashby thought that nobody was so agreeable with so little effort, as Mr. Crofton: but Dacre saw and knew that he was not, and could not be at ease. This apparent intimacy with the man whom he had branded as a cheat, and with whom he had told Dacre he was determined to avoid all further intercourse, was not accounted for: he stood before Dacre in the position of one convicted of hypocrisy; and yet he sought no opportunity to explain away the circumstance. Dacre hoped and expected that he would have drawn him aside in the course of the evening to say something on the subject; but Crofton showed no desire to seek, or even to avail himself of any opportunity to do so, and Dacre retired perplexed and distressed at the inconsistency, not to say insincerity, of his friend.

Dacre had scarcely finished his breakfast the following morning, when Crofton entered.

"Dacre," said he, "I do not ask you what impression your visit of yesterday has made upon your mind: I know full well in what light I must appear to you."

"I feel sure," replied Dacre, firmly, "that it must be in your power to remove the impression that appearances were calculated to give."

"It certainly is in my power to account for, if not wholly to justify, my apparent inconsistency," rejoined Crofton: he paused; "and yet," continued he, "it is almost as painful to explain, as to leave the matter in its present obscurity." But Dacre felt that this explanation was not only due to himself but also due to Crofton's character, and he urged him to proceed. "It probably occurred to you," said Crofton, "that yesterday was selected for an interview with Harper, on account of your intended absence." Dacre said nothing. "And you were right in that idea," continued he: "it was selected by me on that account."

"I had no right to control your actions," observed Dacre.

"That matters not," said Crofton: "I had given you the right to be surprised, at finding me in seeming intimacy with the man whose company I had foresworn to you; and I saw you were surprised—and I felt myself lowered

—and if I tell you the object of our interview, you will be surprised, and I shall not be raised; yet,” continued he musingly, “now I may seem despicable, but when you, understand me, you will feel for me.”

“Then for Heaven’s sake explain yourself,” said Dacre, with warmth.

“I told you once,” replied Crofton, “that wealth had come to me too late:” he hesitated. “Dacre, it is in vain that the riches of others have been heaped upon me, for I can never be rich: I live luxuriously, and yet I am worse than poor; my affairs are involved, and I am actually in distress for want of money.”

“Why did you not tell me this before?” said Dacre eagerly. “Crofton, this is not treating me like a friend—you know I have the power—did you doubt my will to serve you?”

“Stop, stop,” said Crofton, in his more usual tone; “it is true that the pains and penalties of having once been young and inexperienced fall heavy on my shoulders, but I have not turned highwaymen as yet. I grant I have already received the stolen goods the law awards, but I am not going to rob you now of what the law has spared.”

“Do not talk of robbing me,” said Dacre: “tell me only in what way I can serve you—what sum you require; but have no dealings with this Harper, on whose honour you say you cannot depend.”

“Would to heaven I had never had dealings with that rascal!” muttered Crofton, and a look of hatred passed over his countenance as he said so. “But,” continued he, “he is rich—he can assist me—and I am on the brink of ruin. This was the cause of his visit to me.”

“And do you still persist in being assisted by him?” asked Dacre.

“Yes,” said Crofton; “on that, if possible, I am resolved. I am in treaty with him for a loan. This evening I shall know the rate of interest he expects; and then,” added Crofton, with a bitter smile, but careless tone, “if I am satisfied, we shall sign and seal; and double the rate of interest even he dares ask would I pay, to be rid of the sight of that vulgar fellow.”

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Changed is that lovely countenance which shed  
 Light when she spoke ; and kindled sweet surprise,  
 As o'er her frame each warm emotion spread,  
 Play'd round her lips, and sparkled in her eyes.

ROCKS.

Nothing could be more correct than the account of all that concerned Emily, with which Molesworth had furnished Dacre: she had struggled with her grief, and the struggle had not been wholly in vain.

There is always such a disposition to believe in the superhuman, that we listen with complacency to the exaggerations of fictitious characters ; and we are apt to expect, in our heroes and heroines, an eternity of feeling and purpose that is wholly at variance with truth. A bad man must be for ever dead to the sympathies of nature : he must be the atrocious villain from helpless infancy to his violent end. The good man's fame must be fairer than snow—one single failing would sully its brightness : or, lest such consistency should seem inconsistent, we now look for probability in the uniform benevolence of the cold-blooded murderer—the purity and generosity of the brigand and the corsair—the never-ending revenge of the humble Christian—the disinterested views of the gambler, and the learning of the fribble. With all alike it is love guides the woman, and honour rules the man. Their grief must never die, and their revenge must never fade. To presume to be happy, or to forgive a foe, is the death-blow to all claims on our interest. There is no need of physicians for the heroes and heroines that dwell in the land of fancy ; for they are ever blest with constitutions that would mock their skill. Night after night can they, with impu-

nity, toss in sleepless agony on their feverish couches ; and neither strength nor beauty is impaired. Neither fainting, fear, or fatigue, can affect the energies of the most delicate woman : should she weep for days and nights together, no reddened eyes, inflated cheeks, and swollen lips, would dare to mar the beauty of her face. No ! the indelible tears of sorrow would have lent fresh grace to her pensive brow, and finely-chiselled features. But in these fanciful details of impossible beings there is a tendency to lower the value of those which are real. It engenders a disposition to look for moral anomalies—to doubt the existence of feelings not displayed in the demonstrations of passion and to rely on those powers and charms which do not exist, to awaken for others our admiration or sympathy.

Emily Somers had thought herself called upon to sacrifice the first wish of her heart. The sacrifice had been made at the risk of her life, and at the cost of her peace : but it was made ; and delicacy forbade that she should display to others the fond regrets and secret sorrows of her soul.

For a time the world supposed that an engagement subsisted between herself and Dacre ; and that its declaration was only deferred till the first period of mourning was past. But Dacre remained abroad. Nothing more was heard on the subject, and the engagement was denied by the friends and relations of the family. Then arose various and contradictory rumours on the causes of this supposed breaking off. Some said Lady Emily had refused him ; and she was blamed for having given false encouragement. Others said that Lady Kendal had refused her consent—or gave a dramatic sketch of poor Lord Kendal's death-bed scene, wherein he was represented as threatening curses on his daughter's head should she ever unite herself with Dacre ; and when these reports died for want of evidence to support them, people held up their hands, and said, " How shamefully Mr. Dacre had behaved to poor Lady Emily Somers ; that he had won her affections—broken her heart—and was now travelling about, as gay and as happy as possible, flirting with every one abroad ; and would, very likely, end in marrying that foolish, affected Miss Ashby : " and those who did not credit this last version of the case declared the whole story to be without foundation, and that

neither Lady Emily or Mr. Dacre had ever cared for each other.

Nearly a year had elapsed since the death of Lord Kendal. The duchess of Bolton had made repeated attempts to persuade Emily to come over to Denham. Once she had come for a very short visit when no one was there; but she had always pleaded, in excuse of her refusal, her want of spirits, and the impossibility of leaving Lady Kendal alone. Since her father's death she had scarcely seen any but her nearest relations, excepting the Molesworths. The duchess dreaded for Emily the effects of so much grief, such anxious watching, and such complete seclusion, and she again proposed that she should pass a few days with them at Denham, meeting only a few old friends, and some quiet yet pleasing country neighbours. Emily was inclined to refuse. The Molesworths were at Oakley Park, and she thought to make that serve as a reason for remaining at home; but her mother was anxious she should go.

Mary's illness had greatly prolonged her first visit at Oakley, and Lady Kendal had had time to become intimate with her. Her good sense, and the quiet unobtrusive attentions that arise from the sympathy of an affectionate heart, had endeared her alike to both mother and daughter; and her visit was repeated. Lady Kendal expressed her wish that Emily should visit the Boltons; and she now proposed that Mary and Captain Molesworth should remain at Oakley, to bear her company in her daughter's absence, and thus remove the objection she would otherwise raise of leaving her alone.

Emily went. With almost all those present it was a first meeting since death had visited her home. She was still in mourning, and there was a tinge of sadness and of thought upon her countenance that reminded others of the loss she had sustained, since last they met; and they showed in their greeting that they remembered her sorrow. It is easier to mingle with strangers, when first we emerge from the seclusion of grief, than again to meet the friendly faces we have known before; to catch the meaning look; to feel the expressive pressure of the hand, and to see repeated on each countenance the thoughts which swell our hearts to bursting. The tumult of woe has been tranquil

at home ; and cheerful thoughts perchance have broken in, when the tears of affliction are spent. We are told that again we should mix with the world, and the sense of a duty compels our obedience. The effort is made ; and in the silent sympathy of those we meet something seems to whisper in our ear that here we have no business. Our sorrow seems a spectacle to others ; we shrink from the notice it creates ; and we would shroud from vulgar gaze a feeling so sacred. Emily tried to repress all emotion ; she knew she could add nothing to the gaiety of those who had met for social pleasure, but she strove not to seem as a cloud that shed gloom by its presence.

Among others now staying at the Duke of Bolton's were Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth. Mrs. Wentworth was in her brother's confidence respecting Lady Emily : she had written him word that Lady Emily was expected there, and accordingly he selected that time to propose making the visit he had promised to Denham. He was accepted ; and the day after Emily's arrival he came.

Emily knew from the duchess that Sir Edward and the Wentworths had met Dacre in Switzerland ; and though she hoped to be spared even the mention of his name, yet there was something in the idea of their having seen him so much more recently than herself, that made her feel both embarrassed and pleased at this meeting. Sir Edward now sought every opportunity of conversing with Emily without seeming to do so ; he adapted his tone to her present state of spirits ; he engaged her attention on general subjects that should not touch her feelings ; he was alive to what might give her pain ; he turned the conversation of others, when it seemed leading to observations or subjects that could distress her ; he seemed to court her friendship, and she viewed him as a friend.

The duke unconsciously aided these friendly intentions on the part of Sir Edward. Emily was to ride. It was long since she had been on horseback ; and she felt nervous at riding a horse which the groom had declared was the gentlest of creatures, "quite free from vice, though just a little fresh or so sometimes."

"Bradford," said the duke, "you are more understanding in horses than I am ; I wish you would ride Gazelle this morning, and say whether it will do for Lady Emily."

Sir Edward was well pleased with the task. Gazelle was pronounced fit for Lady Emily's use ; and as she mounted at the door, the duke turned round to Sir Edward, saying, half in joke, and half in earnest, "Remember, Bradford, we shall hold you responsible for Lady Emily's safety to-day."

For a time the horse did justice to Sir Edward's recommendation ; but unfortunately the ride was short, and the animal was but too well aware when he turned to go home. It fretted and pranced to get up to the horses that went on before. Emily tried to check its eagerness, and its fore legs were just raised, as if going to rear. She felt the movement, but in a moment of fear she forgot her horsemanship, and tightly drew the reign. The horse reared up high in the air—for an instant they balanced—and then both fell to the ground.

Sir Edward sprang to her help. He placed his foot on the fallen horse's neck, and stretching out his hand, assisted Emily to rise.

"Good heavens ! you are hurt ! say if you are hurt !" exclaimed Sir Edward, in a voice of the deepest alarm.

"No," replied Emily, as she regained her feet, "I believe I am not hurt."

"Are you sure ?" rejoined Sir Edward, looking pale as death.

"Yes," replied Emily, moving a step, "I am quite sure that I am only a little shaken and frightened,"

"To think that I should have risked your life !" exclaimed Sir Edward, in great agitation.

"I risked it by my own want of presence of mind," replied Emily, "so let me now redeem my folly by mounting again."

But Sir Edward would not hear of such a plan. His own horse was only rough in its paces, but perfectly quiet, and she should ride home on that.

Sir Edward could not recover the shock of the accident he had just witnessed. His hands trembled as he assisted the groom to change the saddles : his voice faltered as he described to the rest of the party how the fall had occurred ; and he turned again and again to Emily, to see if she had really escaped all injury from the fall.

"I can never forgive my imprudence in having sanc-

tioned your riding this horse," said he, as again they moved forward. "In my selfish anxiety that you should ride, I pronounced too hastily on his disposition. You will never forgive me, I am sure."

"Indeed," replied Emily, with a smile that showed the sincerity of her words,—“indeed I would forgive you, Sir Edward, if I had anything to forgive; but I am angry only with myself. I ought to have had more presence of mind, and I am ashamed of having caused so much trouble and alarm by my folly.”

"I feel your kindness in saying so," said Sir Edward, "but I cannot blind myself to the fact. I can only thank God for your providential escape."

Emily was distressed to see how much Sir Edward was affected by this unlucky accident; and in her anxiety to free his mind from all suspicion that she blamed him for its occurrence, she was unconsciously adding vigour to the feelings which were hourly strengthening towards her. Emily declared her wish to ride the horse the following day: "And then," said she, "if he throws me again, it will be nobody's fault but my own; and if he goes well, I shall have to thank you, Sir Edward, for a very pleasant ride."

Every one objected to her making the experiment; but she so positively assured the duke of her conviction that, now she was on her guard, no mischance would occur, that he consented, and immediately sent out orders for the animal to have a short allowance of corn, and a large allowance of exercise. The ride was performed with impunity and pleasure; but this incident had much increased what Lady Emily considered only the friendship between herself and Sir Edward. Her desire to convince him that she owed him no ill will for the disaster had made her almost seek to please him. There was no thought of love in her mind, and she dreamt not it might dwell in his. But Sir Edward felt encouraged by her kindness of manner.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Love under friendship's vesture white,  
 Laughs, his little limbs concealing ;  
 And oft in sport, and oft in spite,  
 Like pity meets the dazzled sight,  
 Smiles through his tears revealing.

ROGERS.

"EMILY," said the duchess, one day, "I think Sir Edward Bradford is a greater admirer of yours than ever."

"The admiration is quite mutual," replied Emily, smiling. "I believe he feels the same regard for me I feel for him."

"Unless your regard is of a stronger nature than I believe it to be," rejoined the duchess, "I suspect that you mistake his feelings."

"Why do you think so?" asked Emily.

"First tell me," said the duchess, "if you think you could give to him a warmer sentiment than friendship?"

"Caroline," said Emily, "how can *you* ask me such a question?" and the tears started to her eyes.

"I did not mean to wound you, love," said the duchess; and she kissed her; "but the reserve which exists between us on one point leaves me, you know, in ignorance of your feelings on such subjects."

Emily did not speak—her tears flowed fast.

"Caroline," said she at length, "I can never marry. You need never ask me again, if I could feel for any one a warmer sentiment than friendship. That is all I can give; and I hope and believe that you are mistaken in supposing Sir Edward seeks or wishes more."

"I hope, then, dear Emily, I am mistaken," replied the duchess; but be on your guard not to give him false hopes. Remember, that if *you* mistake love for friendship, *he* may as probably mistake friendship for love."

It is seldom, indeed, that friendship—pure friendship—exists, where love dares creep in. From the ties of kindred and of gratitude may spring affection in its purest form—regard, respect; but the friendship that arises from the conscious preference to each other's society—the friendship that induces the opening of the heart, the almost unrestrained confidence of feelings, thoughts, opinions—the friendship that lets the stranger know the secrets of our home, and yields to intimacy the claims which kindred only should assert—treads a dangerous path. The happiness of one, if not of both, is too often sacrificed in the vain endeavour to check the growth of feelings that are nourished with fresh food. In single life, the wish for dearer ties will soon arise; and often, too often, in married life, has the friendship, begun in innocence and honour, displaced the joy and peace it never can restore.

There are few whose vanity will not rejoice at the flattering distinction of being chosen confidant—few whose hearts can withstand the interest created by this dependence on the counsel, the confidence, or the sympathy of themselves; and friendship, fairest, gentlest child of love, is soon exchanged for passion fierce and strong. Young hearts should beware how they tread in this path of delusion. The friend of the family may prove an admirer: he may win affections that he did not seek—may give his love to one who neither knows nor heeds its possession—he will see the cloud that is gathered on the husband's brow—he may hear the hasty word, the harsh rebuke—then watch the tear that is shed by the wife for coldness or neglect; and from pity for the woman's sorrows springs the love that cannot, or that should not, be requited.

The duchess was right in her caution to Emily to beware of this delusion; and had she remained at Denham, she would have gradually withdrawn herself from Sir Edward's society, lest in him a hope should exist she did not mean to realize. But a letter from Lady Kendal determined her immediately to return to Oakley Park. The Molesworths were already gone. A letter had arrived, which told them of the rapidly declining state of Mr. Wakefield's health. Lady Kendal thought it right they should lose no time in going to him, and had persuaded them to set off for London



within a few hours of that at which they received the intelligence.

Lady Kendal was now alone : the duchess, therefore, offered no objection to Emily's wish to return home that day. Sir Edward and the duke had breakfasted early, were gone on a distant expedition, and started before the post came in. Great was Sir Edward's disappointment to find that Lady Emily had already quitted the house, at which he had fondly hoped to spend a few more days in her company. But he was not without resource. He had made himself very agreeable to some of the country neighbours who were there : and, by some strange coincidence, he had become most intimate with those who lived further from Denham, and nearest to Oakley : and when they hoped that Sir Edward would give them the pleasure of his company at their respective houses, he very gladly accepted their invitations, and soon found himself again within reach of Lady Emily.

A year had elapsed since the death of Lord Kendal, and people again ventured to call at Oakley Park, and ask if Lady Kendal would receive them ; and in company with some, with whom Lady Kendal was well acquainted, Sir Edward also called. The party was admitted. Lady Emily was from home : but Lady Kendal, who had always liked Sir Edward, received him kindly ; and he hoped that from her he should encounter no opposition in his attentions to her daughter. Again Sir Edward rode over to Oakley, and Lady Kendal and Emily were both at home. Perhaps the consciousness of the duchess's observations on his preference for her society made her feel a little embarrassed in his presence ; but she was less at ease with him than she had been at Denham ; he perceived that she was so, and he interpreted her embarrassment favourably to his views. He knew that Lady Kendal had invited none in the neighbourhood to stay at Oakley, and he was not therefore discouraged in his morning calls, by not being asked to pay a longer visit.

" Her ladyship is only in the garden with Lady Emily," said the servant one morning, in answer to Sir Edward's inquiries if Lady Kendal was at home ; and into the flower-garden he was conducted. Lady Kendal was gone ; she had just returned to the house ; but Lady Emily was there :

she shook hands with him, and then turning to the servant said, "Let mamma know." The servant returned, saying that Lady Kendal would immediately join them. In expectation of her coming they loitered about the garden: Emily coloured, and found it difficult to resume the easy, friendly footing on which she had been with Sir Edward at Denham; and she almost wished the duchess had never spoken to her on the subject, and excited these foolish suspicions.

Sir Edward was anxious, but sanguine; and, like all sanguine people, he gathered hope when others would have feared: he augured well from this want of ease on her part. Lady Kendal did not come, and Emily proposed they should therefore return to seek her in the house; but Sir Edward objected.

"I would not for the world disturb Lady Kendal," said he, with the most disinterested politeness; "I have no doubt she will come when she is disengaged. I am sure you cannot dislike being out of doors on such a lovely day, unless," added he, with a little hesitation,—“unless I weary you.”

Emily did not seem to hear the latter part of his observation, but simply acquiesced in the day being fine, and turned down the walk that led towards the house.

"Lady Emily," said Sir Edward, "I fear you are in a hurry to join Lady Kendal; but you will allow me to detain you for one minute?" Emily could not refuse; but it was evident she consented with more civility than pleasure. "I have now so seldom an opportunity of seeing you at all, and still less of speaking to you alone, that I hope you will not refuse me a few minutes conversation."

"Certainly not," replied Emily; "Indeed I should hope you considered both mamma and myself too much as friends, not to know that we should be happy to listen to any subject in which you are interested." She laid a slight emphasis on the word "friends," and Sir Edward paused.

"But *only* as a friend?" asked he, in a tone of disappointment.

"Only as a friend," repeated Emily, firmly and distinctly; for she wished to spare him any further confession of feeling.

"Then I must not speak to-day; but," continued he,

with more agitation, "may I not hope in time that you will allow me—?"

"I will not deceive you," said Emily, still anxious to put an end to this conversation,—“I will not deceive you; what I have said for the present includes the future.”

"I implore you not to say so," rejoined Sir Edward, with great earnestness; "do not speak so confidently of the future; surely time may work in you some change."

Emily blushed deeply, for she thought that Dacre was in his mind also. "You have spoken to me as a friend. Oh, Lady Emily, if your heart is not already engaged, may I not some day—?" Emily's eyes were filled with tears.

"Sir Edward," she replied, as she struggled with her emotion, "to none can I ever give more than the regard and friendship which you already possess."

"To none?" rejoined Sir Edward, in a tone of surprise, if not of incredulity. "No, no, Lady Emily, I may never hope to be the person. It may have been presumptuous in me to have ever indulged such a thought; but you are not—you cannot be—quite sincere when you say 'to none.'"

"I cannot explain myself," replied Emily, and her voice trembled till it was scarcely audible; "but I am sincere in saying that to none who would ask it have I more than friendship to give:—but do not let us talk on this again," said she, making an effort to speak calmly; "let this conversation be forgotten."

"I hope at least you are not offended with me," said he.

Emily extended her hand to him. "You cannot suppose that possible," she replied, in a conciliating tone; "Sir Edward, I value your regard; I am sure we understand each other now, and it will be better we should both forget what has passed; I would not willingly lose your friendship."

Lady Kendal now appeared: she had been detained in the house by some trifling domestic business, and knowing that Emily was with Sir Edward, had not felt obliged to hurry herself; she advanced to meet them, and no sooner had she spoken to him than Emily vanished. She flew to her room, and there gave vent to the overpowering emo-

tions which this explanation with Sir Edward had revived. She thought he had alluded to Dacre—she knew that she had alluded to him in her own mind; memory quickly brought to her view the scenes of happy hours, and poignant sorrow connected with his name, and the tide of grief swept over her again, with all its wonted force and freshness.

Lady Kendal had seen in the nervous and dejected manner of Sir Edward, and in the traces of agitation that were visible in Emily's countenance, that something distressing must have passed in conversation between them; but Sir Edward gave her no explanation.

"Shall you stay much longer in this neighbourhood?" said Lady Kendal, as she wished him good morning.

He said "no;" that he should go to his sister's the following day.

"We shall always be glad to see you when you will call upon us in London," said Lady Kendal, as she gave him the parting shake of the hand, and the friendly good-by.

Sir Edward departed, feeling how poor a compensation were these demonstrations of friendship and regard for the disappointment of knowing that he must never aspire to love.

Emily imparted to her mother all that had passed.

"Are you sure, my love," said Lady Kendal, "that you could never return the preference of one for whom you now feel so sincere a regard?"

"Quite sure," replied Emily; "and no earthly power shall induce me to marry, when I cannot return the affection I receive."

"Sir Edward's wife will be a happy woman," said Lady Kendal, with a sigh.

"She ought to be so," replied Emily, "and he will deserve to be made happy in return. I could neither feel nor confer happiness."

"My dearest child," said Lady Kendal tenderly, "do not suppose that I would urge you to marry any one with whom you could not be happy; but it grieves me to think that your mind still clings to the object you have voluntarily renounced. You have had the courage to break off your engagement with Mr. Dacre; to banish him from

your sight ; will you not endeavour, dear, to banish him from your heart?"

Emily wept. "I have done, mamma, what duty demanded ; but to forget him is impossible. Had he been to blame—had he forfeited my esteem—had he deserved the lot I have awarded him—I could have forgotten him ; but now I cannot."

"My dear Emily, my advice to you can have but one object—the object of your welfare," said Lady Kendal ; and she spoke calmly while the tears stole gently down her care-worn cheeks : "but remember, my life may not be long ; your brother is younger than yourself ; he will marry ; you may not like his wife ; you may not suit each other. It is true, your dear father has secured you from the evils of dependence ; but, my child, will you be happy in a lonely home ? You who have loved so dearly, and been cherished so fondly, will you be content to pass your days with none who look to you for comfort, with none to whom you can look in return for the daily, hourly tenderness which springs from mutual dependence and affection ?"

"No, mamma," replied Emily ; "I cannot, I shall not be happy, should such be my lot, but I will be resigned and useful, if I can."

"Consider well, my love, before you consign yourself to a life which you know will not satisfy your heart."

"It will, at least, satisfy my conscience," replied Emily ; "for how could I bear to marry any one whom I could not esteem ? and how treacherously should I betray the heart I had accepted, when I repaid its warm attachment by so cold a tribute to its merits ?"

"Emily, the young know little of the power of time ; I implore of you to aid its power by your own efforts. I do not ask you to marry Sir Edward Bradford. I will ask you only to allow him to continue, if he wishes it himself, on the terms on which he has hitherto been."

"I told Sir Edward this morning," said Emily, "that I wished our conversation to be forgotten, and that my regard for him was undiminished."

"I am glad you did so," replied Lady Kendal ; "and promise me now, my love," continued she, "that when we go to London you will, at least, give yourself the op-

portunity of becoming better acquainted with him. He is now to you as a declared admirer."

Emily tried to speak.

"I know if you speak you will say it is of no use—so say nothing, my dear. Do not commit yourself further on the subject. In doing so, we often confirm opinions that might otherwise change."

Emily kissed her mother, and was silent.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion.

*As You Like It.*

THE Molesworths had promised Lady Kendal to write from London, and to let her know whether she had not been right in advising them to go there immediately. The letter which had apprised them of Mr. Wakefield's illness was from a servant in the house, whose family had been in distress, and to whom Mary had shown kindness. This woman had occasion to write to Mary's maid, and she wound up her letter by saying that "her poor master was not long for this world; he was going very fast, and he looked already more like a ghost than a Christian; that it was a pity Captain Molesworth and his lady were not sometimes with him, though there might be some as did not think so." The maid gave this letter immediately to her mistress, and Mary showed it to Lady Kendal, asking her advice upon the subject.

This servant of Mr. Wakefield had, more than once thrown out hints that Mrs. Shepherd "had two sides to her face," and had insinuated that she behaves less well to Mr. Wakefield than would appear before company. Mary, not thinking it right to obtain information from such

a source, had never encouraged her to say more on the subject, but she had no doubt that the mysterious "some" who might wish not to see them was meant for Mrs. Shepherd.

Mary told Lady Kendal all she knew respecting Mrs. Shepherd's history, and situation in Mr. Wakefield's house; but, of course, no mention was made of that part of the story which concerned the miniature. It was more than probable that Dacre would have disliked to have those circumstances named; and, indeed, to mention his name at all would have been scarcely possible, when Lady Kendal had herself so scrupulously avoided doing so.

Lady Kendal's advice was to lose no time in going to London: on that advice they acted, and once, since their arrival in town, Mary had written to Lady Kendal, saying how fearfully altered they had found her uncle, and how much they thought him daily declining, in spite of Mrs. Shepherd's constant observations on his rapid improvement. Lady Kendal and Emily were now expecting a second letter from Mary; but it was long before they heard again. The Molesworths were, of course, careful to give no hint of the letter which had brought them to town, lest the well-intentioned servant who had written it should be a sufferer; but immediately on their arrival they proceeded to Mr. Wakefield's house.

Mrs. Shepherd was from home. Mr. Wakefield was seated, as usual, in the arm-chair by the fire-side; but his back was supported by a pillow. His face was shrunk, his eye was more dim, and there was a general look of emaciation, which seemed to threaten his approaching dissolution. He recognized Mary and Harry, but did not seem quite aware that he had not seen them very lately.

"I fear, uncle, by that pillow, that you have been ill since I saw you," said Mary.

"Thank you, my dear," replied the old man, in a feeble voice; "I am much the same as yesterday: you know Mrs. Shepherd has let me have this pillow ever since my illness."

"Mary and I have been out of town for some little time, my dear sir," said Harry; "we did not know of your illness, or we should have come to you."

"Didn't know I was ill!" replied Mr. Wakefield, in a

tone of surprise ; and then putting his hand to his forehead, as if striving to bring back something to his recollection, said, " Very true ! I haven't seen you lately. My good Mrs. Shepherd said she had written to you ; and I think she said you called or sent to inquire after me : but it don't matter."

Harry told him he had received no letter from Mrs. Shepherd.

" Well, it don't signify, Mr. Bingley ; I can't be worried about business now ;" and he looked peevish and harassed as he said so. It was evident that his recollection, even of persons, was much affected, and that he could not bear contradiction or explanation.

Mrs. Shepherd soon entered ; her face and throat were crimsoned over in a moment, as she saw the Molesworths sitting by their uncle's chair. They shook hands with her, and she in some degree regained her composure, if not her good-humour. Mary said how sorry they were to find Mr. Wakefield had been ill.

" It is nothing to call an illness, ma'am," replied Mrs. Shepherd ; " only Mr. Wakefield thinks so much of a cold ; but Dr. Davies says he is mending fast."

" So you say, my dear, but I don't feel much difference myself," said Mr. Wakefield : " you know I can't hold anything in this hand now."

" To be sure not, sir !" replied Mrs. Shepherd, rather sharply ; " the doctor says it is a work of time to recover the use of a limb ; but," added she, in a more conciliatory tone, " I hope, sir, as long as I have the use of my hands, that you won't much feel the want of yours."

" Thank you, my dear, thank you," replied Mr. Wakefield ; " I don't much want my hand now, that's true." Mr. Wakefield seemed a little inclined to sleep, Mrs. Shepherd made them a sign to follow her into the next room, lest the sound of voices should disturb him.

" I fear my poor uncle is very ill," said Mary, so soon as they had left the room.

" No, ma'am, not near so ill as he thinks himself," replied Mrs. Shepherd, in a more cheerful tone. " Old folks are so apt to think worse of their health than they need ; but I have often seen him so before."



"Did he ever lose the use of his hand before," inquired Harry.

"Not exactly," replied Mrs. Shepherd; "but he will sometimes complain of one thing, and sometimes of another."

"Pray, Mrs. Shepherd," said Harry, and he looked steadily at her as he spoke, "did you write to inform us of Mr. Wakefield's illness?"

"No sir," replied Mrs. Shepherd, slightly embarrassed; "I did not take the liberty of writing to you."

"I understood Mr. Wakefield that you had told him you had written, and that we had sent to inquire after him."

"I certainly told Mr. Wakefield that you had sent to inquire," said Mrs. Shepherd, "because he fidgetted at hearing nothing of you or Mrs. Molesworth, and I could not make him remember that you were out of town. I am sure, Captain Molesworth, I often wished you and Mrs. Molesworth were here; for it is very distressing to me, when anything is the matter with Mr. Wakefield to feel such a heavy responsibility." Mrs. Shepherd applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I can quite enter into your feelings there," said Mary, who could not suppose Mrs. Shepherd insincere, when she was moved to tears.

"I hope, Mrs. Shepherd," said Harry, in a serious and rather marked tone, "that you will not allow that responsibility to weigh upon you in future: we shall always be happy to relieve you from that; and as Mary is now Mr. Wakefield's only near relation, she is, of course, the person who should be sent for, whenever anything is the matter." They then talked of Mr. Wakefield's present state; and from that conversation it was evident that Mrs. Shepherd had thought him very ill, but was sincere in her belief that he was now recovering.

Some days passed on: the Molesworths spent much of each day at Mr. Wakefield's, and no very perceptible change for the better or the worse appeared in his state. Harry had seen Dr. Davies, and had learnt from him the particulars of Mr. Wakefield's case: it was impossible he should recover, but it was also impossible to say whether the end was near. Dr. Davies had seen people linger for

months under similar circumstances, or die in a few hours. Harry begged that, should any unfavourable symptom occur, he would instantly apprise him; he also begged that he would not mention their interview to Mr. Wakefield or Mrs. Shepherd, as it might excite unnecessary alarm in them, to know that he had thought him sufficiently ill to have asked a private opinion of his state. Dr. Davies knew the relationship in which Harry stood to Mr. Wakefield; and, as his own opinion of Mrs. Shepherd was not very favourable, he thought it possible that she might be capable of wishing to keep Mr. Wakefield's family from his death-bed, and promised faithfully that their conversation should be regarded as strictly confidential.

One afternoon, as they returned from their walk, they found a note from the doctor was lying on the table: Mr. Wakefield was worse, and he advised their going to him. They did so: Mr. Wakefield was in bed; there had been some unfavourable symptoms in the morning, and he was weakened and did not get up. They remained in the house till Dr. Davies arrived. Harry thanked him by a look for his note: the doctor made a sign to speak to him.

"All present danger is over now," said he, in a whisper; "you may go home safely for to-night."

"Harry and Mary took their leave. Mrs. Shepherd and the nurse resumed their places.

"I made a will—I told you so," muttered Mr. Wakefield. Mrs. Shepherd gave the nurse permission to go down for some refreshment, and promised to ring when she wanted her. Mr. Wakefield was silent again.

"Mary," said he, at length, in a feeble voice.

Mrs. Shepherd whispered, "Did you call, sir?"

"Yes, my dear;—Mary, I say—I have put it in my will: don't tell Mrs. Shepherd."

"Why not?" whispered Mrs. Shepherd again.

"She'll be so angry; she don't like me to worry myself."

"Where is your will, uncle?" inquired Mrs. Shepherd, still keeping up the idea that he was addressing Mrs. Molesworth.

Mr. Wakefield told where it was: "but don't tell," added he, in a childish, frightened voice.

Mrs. Shepherd rose from her seat, withdrew the key from his bolster, unlocked the drawer he had mentioned,

and found the will. Mr. Wakefield dozed. She untied the red tape which confined its folds, and then gently unfolded the paper. Mr. Wakefield moved in his bed, and muttered. She started and trembled from head to foot; but again all was quiet, and she began to peruse its contents.

The sum of money which she had persuaded Mr. Wakefield to promise in bequest to his niece, instead of a gift at her marriage, she had never intended should be bequeathed. She knew her power in inducing Mr. Wakefield to put off business, and she had flattered herself that this never would, and believed it never had been, made a part of his will. But though Mr. Wakefield had not the courage to dispute with her, he had had the conscience to fulfil his promise; and Mrs. Shepherd now actually held in her hand the document which was to bestow upon his niece a part of that fortune of which she had intended to possess herself. But what was her rage and disappointment at finding that not only to herself was bequeathed a sum far short of her expectations, but that she was to depend on the repayment of a debt due to Mr. Wakefield, to make up the amount of her legacy; and that debt was the money lent to her cousin. Mrs. Shepherd's fury could scarcely be restrained. She could have torn with rage the paper that had thus brought to light the disappointment of her hopes: but she was not his heir-at-law, had there been no will. She hastily reached a pen and ink. Mr. Wakefield woke.

"Mrs. Shepherd!" said he, in a helpless, feeble voice; and Mrs. Shepherd started, as though a clap of thunder had pealed upon her: but there was no time to be lost. she approached the bed—the will in her hand.

"My dear! how good of you to stay with me!" said he.

"Sir!" said she, in a voice almost stifled with anger and agitation. "Sir! I know I have been good to you; and how have I been rewarded for my trouble?"

The old man looked at her—he did not understand her meaning, and made no reply.

"I have slaved in your service, and now *this* is your gratitude!"

"Oh, dear! what is the matter?" said Mr. Wakefield; and he began to cry.

"This, sir, is the matter!" said she, in a louder voice, and she unfolded the will before him. "Here is pen and ink, and I desire you will instantly write as I bid you!"

"I can't write—indeed I can't, my dear!" said he, as he struggled with Mrs. Shepherd, who tried to place the pen within his hand.

"At your peril, refuse!" exclaimed she, in a voice of fury; and wound up, by avarice, rage, and fear, to desperation, she shook him violently. He uttered a piercing cry; and, ere she had withdrawn her grasp, Harry Molesworth and his wife were in the room. With an exclamation of horror, Harry seized her by the arm, forced her into the adjoining apartment, and secured the door to prevent her escape.

"Mercy, mercy!" cried Mr. Wakefield, still weeping like a child; and it was long before he could be sufficiently pacified to explain what had passed. Mr. Wakefield said that Mrs. Shepherd had been very angry, and had wanted him to write something, but what it all meant he did not know: but the will was lying on the floor, where it had fallen when the Molesworths entered, and that explained the probable object of her violence. Harry wrote down all that Mr. Wakefield could tell of the matter, and immediately sent for Dr. Davies. Mr. Wakefield repeated over and over again to Mary, "It is very hard: I'm sure she always said she was fond of me. Mary! why did Mrs. Shepherd ill-use me? I have been very kind to her." And then he cried, as if enough of sense and feeling still were left to have been wounded by her ingratitude. Mary watched by his bed-side, whilst Harry went down to impart to Dr. Davies all that had passed.

Mr. Wakefield slept. The door was gently opened, and Dr. Davies and Harry entered. The noise awoke him, and he started, saying, "Mercy, mercy!" and breathed thick and short.

"There is nothing to fear, my dear uncle," said Mary, soothingly.

"Thank you, Mrs. Shepherd, thank you, my dear," said he, and he sank back on his pillow. "I was dreaming. Oh, dear! such a dream! Mrs. Shepherd is always so good to me, I knew it wasn't true."

Dr. Davies approached the bed. The pulse of life had

almost ceased to throb: in a few minutes more all was over. His soul had passed away; and the pleasing delusion, that he had not sheltered a serpent in his bosom, soothed the last thought of his weak, yet amiable mind.

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## CHAPTER XX.

Cunning differs from wisdom as twilight from open day. Wisdom comprehends at once the end and the means, estimates easiness or difficulty, and is cautious or confident in due proportion. Cunning discovers little at a time, and has no other means of certainty than multiplication of stratagems and superfluity of suspicion.

JOHNSON.

MARY was much overcome by the scene she had just witnessed. She had often heard and read of death-bed scenes; she had often thought on death: but to have seen a woman turn upon her benefactor in that awful moment,—to have heard the piteous cry of helpless infirmity at conduct so atrocious,—and then to have rejoiced at that twilight of intellect which had allowed him to close his eyes in peaceful error, was what she could never have expected. She could scarcely think that human nature was so bad, and she recoiled from the knowledge she had so recently acquired. Harry and Dr. Davies persuaded her to leave the apartment; and then came the question of what was to be done respecting Mrs. Shepherd.

Mrs. Shepherd had certainly fallen a victim that day to the snare of the vicious and weak—opportunity. She had premeditated nothing which had passed with Mr. Wakefield, for she had fondly believed it unnecessary; but her curiosity, and, still more, her cupidity, was piqued by what had fallen from his lips, when addressing her as his niece. She thought herself safe from all possible inter-

ruption. The temptation was not resisted, and but for a trifling accident her guilt might never have been known.

The carriage which had conveyed the Molesworths to Mr. Wakefield's had been ordered to wait at the door. When, therefore, it was called, the servant who had remained in the house expected to find it still there. It was not, however, in sight. Captain Molesworth desired he would seek for it : but there had been a mistake, and for awhile the coachman could not be found. During this time Harry and his wife had been in the room immediately below Mr. Wakefield's. Having taken leave of Mr. Wakefield for the day, they did not intend to disturb him by returning to his room ; they had, therefore, come gently up the stairs from the hall, to await the return of the carriage, and none knew they were not already gone. Mrs. Shepherd had heard the house door shut, and had felt herself secure at least from the interruption of their presence, when first the thought of yielding to the temptation before her had entered her mind. But the cry of the old man was heard in the room where they waited. Their alarm added speed to their steps : they flew rather than ran up the single flight of stairs which brought them to his door, and discovered the scene already described.

Mrs. Shepherd was still a prisoner in the room into which she had been thrust by Harry in his first burst of indignation.

"What is now to be done with this wretched woman?" said he. "Would to heaven I could be for ever spared the sight of her again."

"Who is she?" said Dr. Davies : "do you know anything of her family?"

"We know nothing of her but from Mr. Wakefield. From him we learnt she came many years ago, as nurse to his little boy ; that she afterwards declared herself to be the widow of an officer ; that her real name was Mrs. Harrison, and that she re-assumed her maiden name of Shepherd, when reduced by poverty to descend from her proper grade in society."

Dr. Davies shook his head, with a look of incredulity. Harry then related the circumstance of the miniature, though without mentioning the name of Dacre.

"We might, I suppose," said Harry, "bring her to jus-

tice for her assault upon her dying master, and for this attempt to make him forcibly alter his will. But it would be of little avail to the dead ; and could she be induced to reveal the truth concerning that miniature, it might be of importance to the living. What steps would you advise me to take ?”

“ It might be difficult,” replied Dr. Davies, “ in a court of justice, to prove her guilt, from the want of sufficient evidence ; but perhaps the fear of further exposure may induce her now to confess the truth. It is not an easy matter to offer any advice on such a subject ; but,” added the Doctor, pulling out his watch, “ I have a quarter of an hour more at my own disposal ; and, if you like, I will go to her, and then report in what state of mind I find her.”

Harry gratefully accepted the offer, and in painful suspense they awaited his return from Mrs. Shepherd. It exceeded in duration the time which Dr. Davies had said he had to spare, and they feared the task of extracting from her any promise to reveal the truth had proved very difficult ; but it was not so. Mrs. Shepherd was a woman of mean designs and low cunning ; but she had no courage. She was overbearing to the weak, or defenceless, but she cowered before those over whom she had no power. Her sudden detection had overwhelmed her with fear. The scheme which, though planned by another, had been so successfully practised by her, was now defeated. The web which had guided her tortuous path of deceit had snapped, as she had nearly reached the goal. Conscience-stricken she was not : she had not time to think of conscience ; for the disappointment of defeat, and the alarm at the possible consequences of her guilt, occupied all her thoughts.

Dr. Davies returned.—The Molesworths looked anxiously towards him for information.

“ I found her,” said he, “ trembling from head to foot : I told her that Mr. Wakefield was no more ; and her terror visibly increased at that information.”

“ Will she confess,” said Harry, “ to any deceit respecting her own history ?”

“ Yes,” replied Dr. Davies, “ to as much as this—that she was never married, and that neither Shepherd or Har-

riſon are her real names." Mary and Harry looked at each other in ſurpriſe.

"Did ſhe mention the miniature?" asked Harry, with eagereſs.

"I mentioned it to her; but I told her, that I wiſhed her to make no confeſſion to me on that ſubject: I thought it was better, Captain Molesworth, that you ſhould hear from her anything concerning that part of her ſtory, as it might be revealing ſecrets to which I had no right."

Harry thanked him for his delicacy: "What did ſhe ſay when firſt you named to her the miniature?"

"It was then ſhe confeſſed ſhe had never been married; that ſhe had never been acquainted with any Lieutenant Harrison, and that the picture was no longer in her poſſeſſion. My advice to you now is, to go inſtantly to Mrs. Shepherd, to write down in her preſence whatever confeſſions you may further wring from her, and to make her ſign her name, before witneſſes, to this paper. I will call again in the evening, and if I can be of any further ſervice in this curious and diſtreſſing affair, you will then tell me."

Harry followed the Doctor's advice. The hope of being ſpared a more public expoſure had worked its full effect upon Mrs. Shepherd: her ſtatement was written down by Harry, and, in preſence of two witneſſes, the paper was read and ſigned by Mrs. Shepherd. Mary was not preſent at this ſcene; but the excitement of all ſhe had witneſſed had been rather too much for her nerves; and ſcarcely had the witneſſes accompliſhed the ſignature of their names, when a maid ran to inform Captain Molesworth that ſhe was lying on the floor as ſtill as death. Harry graped the paper in his hand, and rashed to the drawing-room, where he had left his wife: Mary had only fainted, and was ſoon reſtored to her ſenſes. But the accident was favourable to Mrs. Shepherd; and when he returned to ſpeak to her once more, ſhe was gone.

The written document was immediately forwarded to Dacre, accompanied by an offer from Molesworth that he and Mary ſhould meet him ſomewhere, for a ſhort time, on the Continent, ſhould he ſtill continue to remain abroad. Mary wrote to Lady Kendal the account of all that had paſſed, ſaving that which would have obliged the mention



of Dacre's name ; and she also spoke of the possibility of their going soon abroad to meet a friend.

The duchess was at Oakley when the letter arrived, and to her it was handed for perusal. The fortunate discovery of so much deceit, the narrow escape of its success, and the pecuniary advantages arising to the Molesworths, from the timely detection of Mrs. Shepherd, were, of course, subjects of interest to the duchess, who had a regard for Mary and her husband. But there was one other passage in the letter which peculiarly engaged her attention : it was clear that the friend whose name was omitted, and for whose sake they now talked of a foreign expedition, could be no other than Dacre ; and she longed for an opportunity of making some allusion to this circumstance to Emily. She could hardly help entertaining a vague hope that, if the marriage had gone off from any cause that could ever be set right, it might be effected through the medium of the Molesworths ; and the more she marked the alteration in the spirits and health of her cousin, the more anxious did she feel that her engagement with Mr. Dacre should be renewed.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

So I have seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hord, and at first it was as fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven as a lamb fleece ; but when a ruder breath had dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age : it bowed the head, and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves, and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and out-worn faces.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

A FEW days afterwards, a paragraph appeared in a newspaper, which afforded the duchess an opportunity of mentioning Dacre to Emily. It was in one of the weekly

papers, which generally announces even the rumour of marriages, between persons coming under the head of fashionable life, that the duchess saw, and read that "an alliance was shortly about to take place between Francis Dacre, Esq. and the lovely and accomplished Miss Ashby;" that the parties had been "spending the winter season at the Eternal city," and that it was understood Mrs. Ashby and her daughter would now soon return to England, accompanied by Mr. Dacre, in order that the necessary arrangements and preparations might be made.

Emily took up the paper, whilst her cousin was sitting in her room. She saw her eye wander to that part where the paragraph was placed. She saw the colour mount to her face, and she was sure that the name had caught her attention. Her colour went—her lip quivered—and the paper fell gently on her knee, whilst she shaded her eyes with her hand.

"Emily," said the duchess, "I know what you have just read: I, too, read that paragraph, but I also know it is not true."

"Then I am not so soon forgotten," exclaimed Emily; and a gleam of pleasure passed over her dejected countenance.

"Caroline, dear Caroline! you are sure it is not true," said she, with an interest that showed how deeply engaged were her feelings on all that concerned him.

"I know, by the date, that this report is untrue," replied the duchess; "for I have a letter with me at this moment from Rome, in which both the parties concerned are mentioned. Here it is: and you may judge by that of the improbability that any engagement should have then subsisted between them."

Emily read the letter, and returned it in silence.

"Caroline," said she, in her saddest tone, "I fear I am even weaker than I thought myself. I thought I could have rejoiced at hearing he had forgotten me, and was happy; but you see I have not borne the test. This must not be. I wish I had not so much selfishness to subdue; but Heaven will aid me," continued she, raising her eyes with a look of pious enthusiasm. "Perhaps I have trusted too much to my own weak spirit—but I will subdue these feelings."

The duchess drew her chair by her side. She looked at her tenderly, and the tears stood in her eye as she did so.

"You are not forgotten, my love," said the duchess.

"I do not think that Francis Dacre ever will forget you."

"I must wish he should," rejoined Emily.

"And must this always be?" said she.

Emily pressed her hand in token of assent.

"At your own request, my dear Emily," continued she, "I have hitherto forbore to ask your entire confidence. You know that, except when I spoke to you of Sir Edward Bradford, I have never even alluded to your reserve with me on this one subject. I do not ask you to be open with me now, if it will add one pang to your too constant suffering: but you once said, that, in time, I should know all. When will that time be?"

Neither spoke for a moment. At length Emily rose from her seat, unlocked a cabinet, unsealed a packet which seemed carefully closed, and withdrew from it a letter.

"Now," said Emily, in a trembling voice, "I will fulfil my promise. I could not bear, Caroline, to tell you at the time, lest you should differ from me in opinion. I thought the course I adopted was the course of duty. Had I dared to listen to any arguments that sided with my feelings, I might not have proved firm. Read this," said she; and, as she caught sight of the well-known writing of her father, she burst into tears. "It will explain better than I can;" and she placed the letter in her cousin's hand.

The letter was one of affection and advice from Lord Kendal to his daughter. The beginning was replete with expressions of paternal love; he even spoke with gratitude of the comfort he had enjoyed in the possession of such a daughter, and hoped that, in reward, she would be as blessed in the children to whom she might give birth. Then came the paragraph which had struck the death-blow to her happiness.

"It is probable, my dear child, that, ere long, you will marry. Should you ever receive this letter, death will have deprived you of the advice and support of your father in the most important era of your existence. None of us

can tell when, or in what manner, their death may occur; and you may stand an orphan, alone in the world, unaided by the cooler judgment and more extended experience of both your parents, when called upon to elect for yourself the guide and companion of your life. Pause and reflect ere you commit your welfare—perhaps your eternal welfare—into the keeping of any one. Not only the happiness, but the character of a wife, may depend on that of her husband. I may not be with you—your dear mother may not be with you—to control your election; but I write, as from the grave, to guide your steps in the path of danger that may lie before you.

“Beware of the man on whose moral and religious principles you cannot depend. Beware of the gambler; beware of the gay and sprightly man of pleasure, whose profligacy is excused for his wit, and whose extravagance is pardoned, because it is reckless and social: beware of the tempter that would wound your feelings and disturb your peace; and reject the flattering delusion, that you can school the vices you disapprove, or the failings you perceive. Choose, rather, as a husband, one who can guide, than the lover you would reform. I would not have you marry one who moved not in the same station of life as yourself. What is termed a *mésalliance* bears within itself the seeds of disunion and disappointment. You may think it pride that dictates this opinion, but experience has strengthened it in my mind.

“One other feeling I have—by some it may be called a prejudice: but as such I do not regard it: I would not have you give your hand to one on whom the stain of illegitimacy is set. Once, my dear girl, the thought occurred to me, that one, who laboured under that stigma, rather sought your society; but I believe I was mistaken; and, for his sake, I hope I was. For you I have never yet felt fear, as I believe your heart is still untouched, as when a child, by any sentiment of love. In character, you may be deceived, but on this objection of birth, there can seldom be any doubt. Do not ever, therefore, expose yourself to the danger of forming an attachment with any who are placed under such circumstances. Remember my feelings—my prejudices (call them what you will)—on that subject; and let the guardian eye of a parent watch

over the destinies of his child, though closed for ever in the sleep of death."

The duchess read the letter. What a letter was that, to have received at such a time as when it was first placed in the hands of the bereaved and sorrowing daughter of its writer! What daggers to her heart were the words of kindness it contained! The parent tree had died, and with its fall had crushed the tender shoot that should have filled its place.

There is a power in the irrevocable words of the departed which seems almost too great to be wielded by man. His life cannot prepare him for the task. From lisping infancy to babbling age, he speaks with little thought, and trusts more to the power of retraction than to the wisdom of foresight. His understanding cannot grasp the full effects that spring from the causes he creates. He has rendered immutable the decrees he would himself have revoked in time. It is the way of heaven, and the word of God, that should alone be immutable. The essence of man, in his perishable state, is change; and when a frail and mortal being would strive to copy Heaven, and fix the fate of man, too often falls upon the victims of his presumptuous thought the curse that keeps the promise to the ear deceiving in the hope. The dying injunction is followed—the parting command is obeyed—and, lo! the misery it would have averted has fallen—the joy it would have blighted is preserved.

The words of dying men acquire something of the power which only inspiration ought to claim. They are halloed in our minds, as the thoughts of one on whom we can no longer think as clogged and blinded by the frailties of our nature. We feel as if the spirit, winged for flight, had already caught the light of a higher and a purer state, and was gifted with wisdom superior to those it addresses in parting. But it is an abuse of power to strive to reign where we have ceased to live—to guide the actions that we cannot see—to govern those whose responsibility is not lessened by this human check upon their will. Man only knows the past: of the present he can rarely judge—of the future he knows nothing. Let him then remember, that his judgment is ever fallible, and his ignorance unenlightened. Let him remember, even in the awful moment

when the gates of eternity are open to receive his soul, that to him has no divine mission been given to control the fate he is not able to foretell.

Lord Kendal knew that he had always in theory disapproved of his daughter's marriage with one in Dacre's situation: he knew not that on him her affections were placed. He little thought that, in trying to avert what he deemed a possible evil to his child, he had struck a blow more fatal to her happiness than any which even his paternal anxiety could suggest.

The duchess held the letter in her hand for a minute ere she could speak. "You have made a noble sacrifice," said she at length: "may Heaven reward you for this obedience to your father's wishes."

"I cannot call this sacrifice a noble one, for I fear it has been made less cheerfully than it ought."

"No Emily, could it have been cheerfully made, it could hardly have been the sacrifice it now has been. Your mother saw this letter, I suppose?" said the duchess, inquiringly.

Emily said she had.

"And she approved of the step you took in consequence of its contents?"

"She did. And do you not also approve of that step?" rejoined Emily.

"My love, I cannot but approve and admire the feeling in you that would resign all things rather than the path of duty: your intentions alone would sanctify your deed in such a case. But, oh! that your poor father had but known of the attachment that subsisted!"

"That," interrupted Emily, "is the point which has added greatly to my mother's sorrow. She blames herself for want of courage in not having told him all that concerned us: but the step I took at least afforded her the comfort of feeling that his wishes were as much obeyed as if he had known all; and I could almost rejoice that he was spared the task of refusing his consent to what I believed could alone secure my happiness."

The duchess made no reply: she read the letter again, and then, for awhile, seemed lost in thought. The silence was at length broken, by her asking Emily if she would allow her to inform the duke of all that she had just learnt.

"Yes," replied Emily, "if you wish it: he will, I am sure, see the absolute necessity of preserving a secret which, were it ever known, might deeply wound the feelings of another."

"On his secrecy you may rely," rejoined the duchess, "and I should like to hear his opinion. My aunt will not, I hope, object to talking with us both on this subject."

"No," replied Emily; "I believe mamma rather wished you should be acquainted with the contents of that letter; but I have always shrunk from even speaking to her of him—of my father's letter—of all that happened at that dreadful time"—and she shuddered as she spoke.

"Emily, your father wished for your happiness. Had he still been alive, and known that your attachment was formed, and that it was no childish fancy, I do not believe that his objection would have withstood the sight of your sorrow."

"Oh Caroline, do not try to persuade me of that: you could not convince me; and if you could, to what purpose would it now be, but to increase my wretchedness?"

"I may never convince you—I may not even wish to do so; but my dear, if you were convinced, and if Mr. Dacre was still constant, surely your wretchedness would not *then* be increased!"

"Caroline!" replied Emily, with some excitement of manner, "if my dear father's objections could be at this moment removed,—could Mr. Dacre become Lord Hexham to-morrow,—it would be too late—not even then should I be his wife. I have told you the cause that broke off our engagement—another cause must ever prevent its renewal."

The duchess looked surprised.

"Then I have not your entire confidence?" said she.

"I have told you all that broke it off," replied Emily, "the rest is not material, for there never can be question of its renewal."

"You are resolved, then, dear, to adhere to the resolution you made on first reading this letter?"

"Nothing can alter my fate," replied Emily: "it is too late for any change to affect my lot; but, dear Caroline, I implore you to urge me no further: nay, more, I must entreat that, should you speak to my mother on this unhappy

subject, you will to her make no allusion to the existence of that other cause, which must *for ever* prevent the possibility of any renewal of an engagement which I have voluntarily renounced. Of that other cause she knows nothing —there is no reason why she should: that secret will probably die with me."

The entrance of a servant to summon Emily to her mother's room interrupted all further discourse. The duchess endeavoured once more to renew the conversation, but in vain: Emily was never disposed again to allude to the subject.

The train of daily occupation went on; and though all had ceased to yield to Emily their wonted pleasure, they helped the time to pass unheeded on, and to spare her from the listlessness that would have increased her painful consciousness of its dull and laggard flight. The day was fixed for their return to London. It was a sad return to the scene of all their bitterest grief; and Emily had no spirits to enter into society. A few morning visitors were alone permitted to break the monotony of their secluded life; and amongst the most frequent of those visitors was Sir Edward Bradford.



Ashby's observation was eagerly assented to : all agreed it would be quite a sin to miss such an opportunity : the carriages in waiting at the door were put in requisition, and to the Colosseum they drove.

Luckily for Dacre, a cavalier more anxious, and less welcome than himself, had offered his arm to Miss Ashby. Cecilia was in the high-tide of flirtation with Mr. Fitzgerald, who was now just recovered from the malaria fever ; and Mrs. Ashby fearing to deprive her daughters of those by whom it was desirable they should be escorted, had eagerly secured to herself the only married man of the party. Dacre was thus enabled to linger behind, and to indulge in the thoughts to which the scene gave rise, without the interruption of such remarks as would not harmonize with his own feelings. He kept within reach of the light which guided them, but not within hearing of the conversation going on.

A brother of some monastic order led the way up the flight of time-worn steps that conducted them to the place, which afforded the most striking view of the building. The light of the lamp which was carried by this guide brought out in strong relief his long, loose robe, secured by a cord, and the shining head where age had swept away the hard line of the tonsure. The rest of the party, enveloped in cloaks and shawls, followed as a dark and moving mass behind him, and their voices were now hushed to a whisper. The effect was picturesque and striking : it seemed not to belong to the age in which we live ; and Dacre was beginning to enjoy something of that dreamy happiness, which exists only when we can shut out the present by the thoughts of the past, or the anticipation of the future.

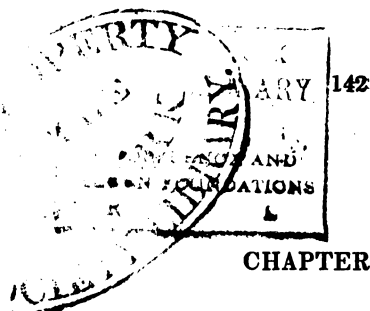
There are times when even the consciousness of our own identity seems an interruption to the enjoyment of the scene before us. There are times when we would wish to forget the very name we bear—to forget the sorrows, the joys, the story of our own life—to cast away all that is individual—to think of man as a multitude—to think of ages in place of years—to turn from the spot in which we live to the universe created around us. These are the times when the soul seems to start from the frame

which encases it, and wings its lofty flight above the matter where it dwells. It is then we seem endowed with a capacity of thought beyond our usual power, and dread to be recalled by some dull reality from the land of fancy into which we have strayed. When the imagination is thus exalted by enthusiasm, who has not desired the oblivion of self? It is said that no man is a hero to his servant: still less can he be a hero to himself: and when the mind is elevated by the scene without, and the thoughts within, he shrinks from the recollection of his own insignificance, and would forget the common-place details of character and feeling, of which he knows himself to be composed.

The night was clear, serene, and warm: the sky was decked in all its brightest gems, and the moon shed around a light which half recalled the daylight blue of heaven. The irregular outline of the building caught the moonbeams as they fell, and by this partial illumination its dimensions seemed magnified even beyond its real size. Time has now worn away the neatness and regularity that mark the hand of man; and this edifice, which has withstood the destruction of decay, and the rude assaults of war, stands forth like a feature of nature itself, and partakes of the sublimity which belongs to her works.

When we think on the strange vicissitudes to which this structure has been applied, the lesson comes home to our hearts, how little he who sows can tell who shall reap the fruits of his labour; and when we gaze upon that now peaceful arena, where the warm blood of life has gushed in savage sports, and cruel martyrdom,—when we remember that this building was based on the Pagan hatred to the believers in revealed religion—that it was erected to commemorate the conquest of Judea, and devoted to the execution of persecuted Christians,—when we remember this, and behold its splendid ruins, preserved from pillage and destruction by their consecration to that mild faith whose early converts died upon this stage,—we rejoice to see that good has been thus returned for evil. We triumph in the fall of heathen barbarity, but still more do we glory in this type of our Christian profession.

“Dear, how pretty!” exclaimed Miss Cecilia, with great energy; and Dacre’s dream was over. “Only see,” con-



## CHAPTER XXIII.

He that stands upon a slippery place  
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up.

KING JOHN.

ON Dacre's return to Mrs. Ashby's apartments, he found his own servant waiting, who had come to tell him that a gentleman, arrived from England that evening in Rome, had called at his house, and left his card and a message, to beg that Mr. Dacre would call upon him immediately at the hotel, as he wished to deliver into his own hands a packet which had been confided to his care. Dacre, looking at the name, remembered that one so called had been a friend of Harry Molesworth's. The idea that some sad intelligence awaited him, instantly crossed his mind. He hardly knew what to anticipate: but his anticipations were seldom cheerful; and, hastily taking leave of Mrs. Ashby, he repaired to the hotel. Dacre sent up his card, and was soon in the presence of the mysterious bearer of the interesting packet.

As he entered the room, he looked eagerly to see if the stranger's countenance betrayed the consciousness of any distressing communication; but there was not the slightest trace of agitation to be seen on the young man's face, as, with good-humoured civility, he expressed his regret that he had not found him at home when he called.

"I was anxious," continued he, "to fulfil my promise to our mutual friend Molesworth, of delivering into your own hands, without delay, a packet of which I am the bearer." Dacre thanked him. "Here it is," said he, unlocking his writing-case. "I hope it has not been inconvenient to you to call this evening; but Molesworth had made so great a point of this being given to you immediately on my arrival, that I thought it better to leave word

at your house that I had the packet in my care. Perhaps you expected it?"

"No!" replied Dacre, "I expected a letter from Molesworth last post, but none arrived; and I was, therefore, expecting to hear from him to-morrow."

The young man smiled. "I told him," said he, "that I should beat the post, when I offered to take charge of his letter—and so I have."

Dacre took the packet in his hand: it was sealed with black, and he did not dare even to glance at its contents till he had reached his home.

The packet contained not only a long letter from Harry, relating the circumstances of Mr. Wakefield's death and Mrs. Shepherd's conduct, but also the statement, to which she had, in presence of witnesses, subscribed her name. That statement at once surprised, perplexed, distressed and pleased him; but he was bewildered by the information it afforded, and the feelings to which it gave rise; and it was sometime ere he could determine what line of conduct he should pursue. There was no one with whom he felt he could consult: Crofton was at Naples, and with none other did he feel inclined to discuss a subject so deeply interesting to himself. But there was no time to be lost, and before he even attempted to close his eyes that night, his resolution for the morrow was fixed.

Early the next morning Dacre quitted the house, and, with a nervous, hurried step, he walked to Mr. Harper's lodgings: there was a slight demur to his admittance, but he begged his name might be taken up, and that Mr. Harper might be told he wished to see him a few minutes on business. Harper was surprised, and, perhaps a little disconcerted by this message; but Dacre was admitted.

"Mr. Harper," said he, "I am sorry to have intruded upon you so early in the morning, but I was anxious to speak to you."

"No intrusion, I assure you, Mr. Dacre," replied Harper, and he gave him a short, suspicious glance, as if he would ascertain on what errand he had come.

"I believe, sir," said Dacre, "that I am not mistaken in the fact that you are well acquainted with a lady of the name of Shepherd."

lives I

Harper shook his head, and turned away, as he replied that he knew nobody of that name.

"I am aware," rejoined Dacre, "that *Shepherd* was but the assumed name of the person in question ; but, Mr. Harper, you will not, I believe, deny your acquaintance and relationship with the lady residing at Mr. Wakefield's, who was generally called by that name, who was supposed by Mr. Wakefield to be the widow of Lieutenant Harrison, and whose real name was neither Shepherd nor Harrison."

"Really, sir," replied Harper, in a tone as if offended by Dacre's question, "I cannot conceive in what manner it can interest you to know with whom I am either acquainted, or related."

"Perhaps not," said Dacre, more carelessly, "but the object of my inquiry may be of consequence to you, sir, if not to me."

Harper looked inquisitively at him.

"You are, I suppose, not yet aware of the very recent death of Mr. Wakefield?"

"Mr. Wakefield dead!" exclaimed Harper, and a look of satisfaction, rather than of sorrow, shot across his face.

"Yes, sir," replied Dacre, gravely, "Mr. Wakefield is dead, and you are, I presume, the Mr. Harper whom he has mentioned in his will."

"Certainly," replied Harper, forgetting all other consideration in his anxiety to avow himself as one mentioned in the will.

"Then, sir," said Dacre, looking at him steadfastly in the face, "you are the person in whose possession is the miniature which passed for the portrait of Lieutenant Harrison."

Harper reddened, and spoke quickly: "If you have anything," said he, "to tell me about Mr. Wakefield's will, I beg you will do so; but, sir, upon any subject that concerns one of my relations, I am not bound to answer the questions it may please you to ask."

"What I ask you, Mr. Harper," replied Dacre, sternly, "concerns rather my family than yours: the miniature to which I allude is the portrait of my father, and to none can make be of as much value as to his son."

"I don't forget my good sir," rejoined Harper, with his

contemptuous smile, "you have offered no proof that the miniature in question is in my possession, and still less that it is the portrait of your father."

"My proofs, Mr. Harper, on that subject, are, I believe, indisputable," said Dacre, in a firm, decided manner; and, drawing from his pocket the statement made by Mrs. Shepherd, he placed it on the table, begging Harper would peruse its contents.

Harper snatched up the paper, and his eyes glanced quickly over the writing: "This is the work of intimidation," said he, angrily; and crushing the paper in his hand, he held it, unperceived by Dacre, to the lighted taper that stood on the chimney: in a moment it was in a blaze.

"Your proofs have ended in smoke, sir," said he, with a smile of coarse humour.

"It is immaterial," said Dacre: "you have burnt only the copy; the original is still in my possession; and your conduct has confirmed my belief in its contents."

Harper looked angry and disconcerted.

"Mr. Harper, I know not to what purpose you would deny me the possession of that picture," said Dacre. "To me only can the portrait be of real worth; but if you have attached to its setting any pecuniary value, I shall be happy to pay the price you ask."

"The portrait may be of greater value to me than the setting," replied Harper, doggedly; "and if I possess the picture, I shall probably retain it."

"If you possess it sir?" replied Dacre, angrily: "you cannot—you dare not—deny the truth of that woman's confession, or you would not have destroyed it. Have a care, Mr. Harper! have a care! your character is one which will not stand another breath of scandal: it already totters; a straw would make it fall."

"I have friends who will take care of my character, thank you Mr. Dacre!" replied Harper, with insolent carelessness.

"I doubt their existence," said Dacre, warmly.

"Yet foremost in that number may stand your own particular friend!" replied Harper.

"Whom do you mean?" inquired Dacre.

"No other than Mr. Crofton! Whilst Crofton lives I

shall never want a friend," rejoined Harper, with great coolness.

"Be not over confident," said Dacre, emphatically. "Crofton may befriend the unfortunate, but I believe, sir, you know that he will not countenance the dishonourable."

Dacre fixed his eyes upon him as he spoke. Harper shrunk from his piercing look.

"Mr. Crofton will never play me false," said Harper, with a tone of assumed confidence.

"Crofton will never sanction false playing in others," replied Dacre: "but, Mr. Harper, this is nothing to the purpose. Consider the conduct of your relative; consider your own position, as having been privy to the deceit which was practised upon her benefactor. She has confessed her name to be the same as yours. She has declared that to serve you she persuaded Mr. Wakefield to advance money to a considerable amount. She has confessed that from you she obtained the picture she represented as the portrait of Lieutenant Harrison—that she believes it to be Major Dacre, and that it was at your own request she returned it to you, when informed that it had excited my attention. Mr. Harper, remember all this; I have asked but a trifling favour: and," continued he, with renewed energy, "it will be unwise in you to refuse it."

"Sir! would you threaten me?" said Harper, angrily. "You think me in your power; you little know," added he, with a bitter smile, "how much more you are in mine."

Dacre started; and indignantly demanded explanation.

Harper was silent for a few minutes. "You offered, just now, Mr. Dacre, to pay the price I demanded for that picture. It may be worth your while, sir, to be liberal."

"Name your price," said Dacre, contemptuously.

Harper paused for a moment; then sitting down to the table, he wrote a few lines, sealed up the paper, and presented it to Dacre.

"I have written down the terms on which I will consent to transfer the picture to you. You will read this when you get home. The sum may seem large to you; but take my advice, sir," said he, in rather a familiar tone, "do not reject my offer hastily. I shall expect your answer before night."

Dacre named the hour when he would call again, and was beginning to say something more when Harper interrupted him.

"There is no use in further discussion on this subject; for on these terms only will I part with this picture, and with all that can make it desirable for you to have it, or for me to retain it."

Dacre was, indeed, startled to find on opening the paper, how large a sum had been named. It was evident that Harper was in possession of some secret connected with the miniature; and in his first eagerness to learn that secret, Dacre felt inclined to agree to the terms proposed. A moment's reflection told him it was impossible. He had already bound himself as security for Crofton to so large an amount, that it was impossible to form any fresh engagement, without at least the risk of utter ruin. Should he ever be made answerable for Crofton's debt to Harper, he could not satisfy the present exorbitant demand, without reducing himself to a state of beggary. Crofton had declared that in a few months he would release him from his suretyship. Till that release he had no right to bind himself further; but the more he considered the manner and words of Harper, and the extraordinary value he had attached to the miniature, the more desirous he became to agree to the terms proposed. He thought of writing to Crofton—of stating to him his position; and of trying, if possible, to make some such arrangement as would place him at liberty to negotiate further with Harper. He determined to keep his appointment that afternoon, and hoped then to obtain either a reduction in terms, or the power of delay, ere he gave his final answer.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

Like wind the bounding courser flies;  
 Earth shakes his thundering hoofs beneath;  
 Dust, stones, and sparks in whirlwind rise;  
 And horse and horseman pant for breath.

BURGER'S "*Leonora*," translated by SPENCER.

IN the course of the morning, Dacre called at Mrs. Ashby's in order to apologize for his abrupt departure the preceding evening. Whilst sitting with Mrs. Ashby, the two young ladies, their riding chaperon, and Mr. Fitzgerald, entered: they had just returned from their ride; and a few questions were asked and answered, respecting the route they had taken, &c. They had been on the Alban road. Miss Ashby said her nerves had been dreadfully shaken: she had been alarmed at a carriage driving furiously by; and though she confessed her horse was not frightened, she had not recovered the fear that he would have started; and she looked at Dacre as if she expected he would be touched by this feminine weakness. But Cecilia, who was wholly uninterested in her sister's false alarms, had meanwhile engaged his attention by describing the carriage, and the pace at which it was going.

"Who can it be?" said Mrs. Ashby, afraid lest any should have departed whom she wished should remain.

"It just occurs to me who it was—I am sure of it," exclaimed Cecilia, with great animation; "I thought it was somebody I knew; and now I remember, it must have been that odd man that I could never get on with: you all know who I mean," said she, trying to recall his name: but nobody knew who she meant by that description; till at last she remembered "Mr. Harper."

"Harper!" repeated Dacre, with unfeigned surprise and interest.

"So it was," said Fitzgerald, reddening as he spoke: "I thought I knew the carriage again: I have an eye for a carriage, go what pace it will.

"I must wish you good-morning, Mrs. Ashby," said Dacre, rising to depart. "I have business with Mr. Harper, and I am anxious to ascertain whether he has quitted Rome."

"I will come with you," said Fitzgerald; "for, to say the truth, I should be sorry enough, on my own account, to find he had gone so abruptly.

So saying, they both quitted the house immediately; and Cecilia secretly wished she had never given utterance to her surmise respecting the flying traveller.

"Do you know much of Harper?" inquired Fitzgerald, as they walked quietly along. Dacre said he had very little personal acquaintance with him.

"I hope he is not a rogue," said Fitzgerald.

Dacre made no reply.

"If this fellow should turn out a sharper, I shall be the loser by some hundreds more than I can afford," observed Fitzgerald.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dacre, "I am sorry to hear it."

They had now reached the door of Harper's abode: no one was at home who could or would tell them anything of Mr. Harper's movements: he was not within; but beyond that no information could be obtained. Fitzgerald proposed going to the place where Harper's carriage had stood. They did so: the carriage was gone—there was no doubt that that carriage was Harper's; and Fitzgerald was sure it was that which they had met on the Naples road.

This evidence was deemed sufficient to determine their course, and they decided on instantly setting out in pursuit of Mr. Harper. Fitzgerald was anxious to accompany Dacre, in hopes of recovering the money which he had lately won from Harper at play. He had been drawn in first at Crofton's house to gamble—had lost considerably—but had recently won back again from Harper a part of that sum; and he feared that it was to avoid the repayment of himself and others, that Harper had taken this sudden flight. Having once determined on pursuit, no time was

lost; Fitzgerald and Dacre separated—the passports were procured—the horses ordered—the carriage prepared, and in an inconceivably short time from that in which Harper had been met, Fitzgerald and Dacre might have been seen galloping at a still greater rate on the very same road.

On they went, with all the speed which command, entreaty, bribery could effect. At each post-house they inquired what time had elapsed since the carriage had passed, which they supposed was conveying Harper. For the first two stages they seemed hardly to gain upon him; at the third the time was shortened between the arrival of the pursued and the pursuers; and they began to hope his speed might have relaxed as he got further from Rome.

They had now reached the Pontine Marshes. The moon was up, and its pale and sickly light came well in harmony with the plain of death they traversed. Herds of buffaloes and horses occasionally broke the low unvaried line of the horizon, whilst the shadows cast from the trees on the side of the road marked the straight line of their route. By daylight, it is here a saddening sight to see the earth decked out in all the brightness of its freshest verdure—to see the cattle grazing, and the horses, scarcely tamed by man, exert their speed in playful wildness. We think that scenes like these should tell of peace and plenty to the man who treads the soil; but we look around, and see disease has preyed on every form; and on every cheek seems set the pale cadaverous stamp of sure decay. We behold man, to whom all things were given for his use, thus droop and die where other creatures live, and vegetation thrives. Here are the condemned of prisons sent to delay the doom their guilt has sealed. It is fearful to watch the work of justice wrought by this slow-consuming poison; and still more shocking to gaze upon the mark of crime that sits with death upon the convict's face, reminding us, each moment, of the life that has unfitted him to die. But night drops a veil over sighs like these; and onward the travellers dashed, with a speed that seemed to dare the swift arrow of the destroying angel. The horses' feet now scarcely touched the ground on which they passed, and in this excess of activity and life the thoughts of death and weakness were forgotten.

The increased rapidity of motion gave new hopes of

success to their chase ; and Dacre and his companion felt their spirits rise at each step that brought them nearer to the object of pursuit. Neither had formed any definite notion of the plan to be adopted, should they succeed in overtaking the carriage, and should Harper prove the fugitive. On that point it had indeed occurred to Dacre, more than once in the beginning of their journey, that they had by no means conclusive evidence ; but now, in the heat of eager pursuit, all was forgotten, saving the immediate object of reaching the carriage. They followed ; and they continued to ask, with breathless eagerness, at each post, how long it had preceded them. One hour only was it in advance ; and each horse seemed gifted with wings to do its master's bidding.

Terracina would now be soon in sight ; but they had no time to think of brigands or of escorts, or of all the fears expressed, and of all the cautions given, to those who venture on this road by night. They longed to hear again how much was gained upon the traveller's flight, and they watched with interest for the first glimpse of the place where fresh intelligence would be gained.

Terracina was in sight. The moon just tipped with light the straggling dwellings of the ancient town, that crowns the hill above, whilst the bright red glare of torches brought to view the houses of the street below. A crowd of people was distinctly seen. There were men on horseback, and their shining heads and breasts, which gleamed in the light, bespoke at once the helmet and cuirass of soldiers. What could it mean ? Their thoughts were onward bent. They trembled lest any disturbance in the town should delay their progress.

A few minutes now brought them to the inn ; but their arrival had increased the bustle, and for awhile it seemed hopeless to obtain any distinct account of the commotion in the town, and this assembling of troops. "Briganti" and "soldati" were the words most often heard, and at length they made out, that information had been just received of an intended attack upon the carriages of a Russian prince and suite, expected that night from Naples. The troops had been summoned in consequence, to guard the road between Terracina and Itri. The landlord strongly urged upon Dacre and Fitzgerald the danger of proceeding

on their route, and the absolute necessity of their halt at his house ; but they were deaf to all remonstrances : their impatience to depart increased with the fear of delay.

They ascertained that the carriage they pursued had left the town but half an hour before their arrival, and that such had been the traveller's eagerness to proceed, that he refused to wait for the protection of the troop now setting off, and had taken only two soldiers by way of escort. This troop was now, however, in readiness. Dacre and Fitzgerald were not sorry to avail themselves of the protection which the other gentleman had refused. At another time they might have been disposed rashly to dare the dangers of a *rencontre* with these heroes of the road and mountain ; but the fear of being stopped, and thus losing the object of pursuit, made them gladly accept the offer that might spare them that danger.

Again they found themselves in motion, and a thousand varied thoughts came crowding on their minds, as the sight of the guard kept alive the recollection of the danger that demanded their presence. Fitzgerald once declared "it would be rather good fun to have a bit of a fight." But Dacre was not inclined to talk—his mind was pre-occupied with things of the past and the future, too serious for his companion's sympathy ; and they journeyed on in silence, each following to himself the train of thought which the scene and circumstances had called into action. A soldier rode on each side of the carriage, some of the troop before, the rest behind ; and though the stillness of the air and the quiet of night gave distinctness to every sound, to these sounds their ear became accustomed, and they began to be lulled into the false security which even a brief impunity will give.

Another moment, and that security was shaken. A distant shot was heard, and they both started up to see if that shot had been heard by others, and to listen for its repetition. It was repeated. The word of command was loudly given to the guard, and forward they galloped with a speed which bore them soon from out of sight or hearing of the carriage. Two only were left for protection to the travellers ; and had it not been for their presence, neither threats nor entreaty would have induced the postilion to advance. Nothing, however, could persuade him to continue at the

rapid pace at which, till now, he had gone. He dreaded the possible attack of the brigands, and hoped, by delay, to give time to the soldiers to disperse the assailants before he reached the spot where first the shots were heard.

It is hard for the bravest to endure suspense ; and this lengthened uncertainty, not only of what might befall themselves, but of what might have already been the fate of others, pressed with appalling force upon their minds, and made their situation insupportable. Was it possible that these shots were directed against the carriage which they believed to contain Harper ? or had he escaped, and some other been attacked—perchance the prey for which the robbers lay in ambush ? Had that one short sound dealt death and desolation to the home of affection and peace ? Had any fallen, on whom others clung with all the fond dependence of helplessness and love ? Who could tell to what misery that sound had given birth ? and the sad visions of domestic grief were quickly summoned into fancy's view.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

A death bed 's a detector of the heart ;  
Here tired Dissimulation drops her mask,  
Through life's grimace, that mistress of the scene !  
Here real and apparent are the same.

YOUNG.

MORE than sufficient time had elapsed for the troop to have reached the spot where first the shot was heard, and the sound of other shots now fell distinctly on the ear. They seemed scarcely nearer than the two which first roused their attention : but the direction changed ; for the noise was considerably to the left of the road, and it seemed,

therefore, probable that the soldiers must have pursued the robbers, with whom they were now engaged. The postilion, no longer alarmed for his own safety, yielded at length to the bribes and threats held out to induce him to increase his pace, and galloped rapidly on. A few minutes more, they thought, must now bring them to the spot where the attack had commenced; and they strained their eyes, to look for any object which might serve to tell them aught of the catastrophe that had occurred. Another moment—and both exclaimed at once, “A carriage!”

A carriage stood in the road; the horses were taken off, and it was guarded by four soldiers. Dacre and Fitzgerald sprang from their seats to obtain a better view. They stopped: Fitzgerald recognized the carriage to be that which they pursued; and in breathless haste they asked one of the soldiers what had become of its owner.

“E morto,” was the reply.

“Dead!” repeated Dacre, as he turned to Fitzgerald with a look of horror.

“Where had he been carried?” asked Fitzgerald. The man pointed to a house near the road.

“Let us go there instantly,” said Dacre, “he may not be really dead:” so saying, he jumped from his carriage, followed by Fitzgerald; and guided by the light which glimmered in the window, they quickly made their way to the cottage.

The first glance satisfied them to the identity of the person they sought. Stretched on a table, in death-like stillness, Harper lay extended. They thought he was dead, but life was not extinct: he had been wounded in the back, and the wound, imperfectly bound, still bled. Dacre staunched the blood, and applied such remedies as the place afforded, to restore the fainting man to consciousness and life. He opened his eyes, and looked on Dacre and Fitzgerald, but did not seem to recognize them. They feared his sense was gone, though the frame still lived; and again for awhile he sank. He soon became restless, and turned from side to side, as though in pain.

“Hold him, Dacre,” said Fitzgerald, fearing he would fall from the table.

“Dacre!” exclaimed Harper, who heard the name, and

started up with a wild and feverish expression, that made their blood recoil.

"I am here," replied Dacre, taking his hand. "I fear you are much hurt, Mr. Harper: you are wounded, and I am come to assist you."

"You are wounded, and I am come to assist you," muttered Harper, and again and again he repeated that sentence, as if unconscious of its meaning. His fever now rapidly increased, for the wound had begun to inflame; and his talking, which was incessant, was never coherent, and not always articulate. At length some sudden fancy seemed to strike his mind, and he exclaimed, "I will tell all."

"Mark well his words," whispered Dacre to Fitzgerald: "they may be of importance to me."

"You shall repent, sir, you shall repent," continued Harper: "no, no, Sarah—give me that picture." His words ran into each other, and for a time they could distinguish nothing further. "Where is my letter-case?" inquired Harper, with some vehemence, but more coherently.

"Probably in your carriage," replied Fitzgerald, "unless the brigands have taken it."

"No, no, the villains have not taken that. Go, sir—go, I entreat you," continued he with great excitement, "I must know that my letter-case is safe." Fitzgerald left the room. Dacre had sent to Terracina for a surgeon, and the man now entered; he examined the wound: the paroxysm of pain had a little subsided, and Harper understood that it was by a medical man he was attended. "Am I to live or die? tell the truth," said he, in Italian, to the surgeon. The surgeon told him at once that the ball had not lodged, but that the injury was so severe that he could not survive many hours. Harper buried his face in his hands; he said nothing, but the answer had evidently been a severe, perhaps unexpected shock to his mind.

Dacre approached him. "Mr. Harper," said he, "if you have any wishes that I can fulfil, I will promise to perform them."

Harper seemed moved at the offer, and, in a voice of some emotion, said, "I deserve nothing from you."

"You may have injured me," replied Dacre; "but



under existing circumstances, those injuries ought to be, and are forgiven."

"Where is my letter-case?" said Harper, again groaning in pain. "I will not die the rascal I have lived—give it to me—give it to me," said he, and he writhed in seeming agony of mind and body. Fitzgerald returned, the letter-case could not be found; the brigands who had quickly routed the poor escort of two soldiers, made booty of all they could find before the troop had arrived, and it was supposed the case must have fallen into their hands. "It must be found—look again—look again," exclaimed Harper; "I cannot endure this," said he, in a voice of anguish, and his face was convulsed with pain and agitation. Fitzgerald again left the room.

"Mr. Harper," said Dacre, in a whisper, as he approached the dying man, "if you have anything on your mind that you would wish to impart, I entreat of you not to delay; you know the worst—consider your awful situation."

"Did Crofton ever speak of me?" said he. Dacre said he had. "Did he uphold my character to you?" continued he, fixing his eyes upon Dacre as he spoke.

"To you it must best be known the manner in which Crofton was likely to speak of you; it cannot now be material to know to whom his opinion was expressed." Harper made no reply: there seemed a struggle in his mind, but he was silent; till suddenly recollecting it was strange that Dacre should be with him, he said—

"What brought you here, Mr. Dacre?"

"I came," said Dacre, "in pursuit of you. I came to speak to you of the terms, on which you proposed to resign into my hands the picture of my father. I found you had left Rome, and I pursued you: if there is anything connected with that picture of which you have the knowledge, tell me, I implore of you, ere it be too late."

"Where is the letter-case?"

"Fitzgerald still searches for it," said Dacre; "but tell me how you came into possession of that picture: tell me if you are in possession of any secret that concerns me."

"Crofton knows all," replied Harper: and Dacre feared his mind was about to wander again. Again he repeated the question.

"How came that picture into your possession?"

"I found it in your father's desk," replied Harper.

"Did you know my father?"

"I lived with him."

"When?"

"When he died."

"Are you acquainted with any secret of his?"

"You shall know all," said he; "but why don't he come? where is it? give me the case." Dacre tried to calm his excitement; but his limbs were convulsed, and it was some time before he could speak again.

"Is any one in your confidence?" inquired Dacre.

"Crofton knows all," he repeated. "I have wronged you, but it was his fault."

Dacre would not believe that Crofton could have injured him.

"Mr. Harper, all wrongs from you are now forgiven; but beware at this awful moment of what you say of others, that cannot be recalled."

Harper did not seem to heed this appeal. "You will find it in the case," said he, in a feeble voice.

"What shall I find?" asked Dacre.

"The secret."

"The case cannot be found," rejoined Dacre; "tell me," said he, with increasing eagerness, "what that secret is—Oh, do not delay." Harper made an effort—he slightly raised himself—turned towards Dacre—looked at him a moment—

"You will find"—said he: he paused:—his head drooped upon his chest. Dacre supported him: his frame was stiffened by the last convulsive struggle, and a dreadful groan escaped his lips, as he expired.

Dacre gazed for a moment on the corpse that lay before him: death had relaxed the hard features of the wretched man, and the agonized expression was now changed for one of peace and repose. Where was the soul which had harboured dark thoughts? Where was the consciousness that had brought remorse for their existence? All that had animated—all that had disfigured—the form that lay stretched before him, was now fled; and it was a relief to gaze

upon the still unmeaning look which death had fixed upon that face.

When death has stamped repose on some loved countenance, whose life has seemed a guide to higher bliss—when death can sit, but as the sleep of innocence and rest—when death can seem the haven where the pure and gentle spirit sought protection from the storms of life—we are not shocked to see that change: tears of grief are shed; but we grieve for ourselves, not for them. The calmness of death seems befitting their life; and, we dare, with humble hope, to think they have not lived in vain. But, oh! how different when the transformation is from passion to that changeless calm: we see that rest is given to the image on which guilt has traced its restless track; we see that all that is dark is fled; we know that all which of that being is now fair, must perish—all which was dark, is eternal. We shudder at the thought, and feel that, in mercy to ourselves, will we obey the heavenly precept “to judge not, that we be not judged?”

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Know'st thou not,  
 That when the searching eye of Heaven is hid  
 Behind the globe, and lights the lower world—  
 Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen,  
 In murders and in outrage bloody here?  
 But when, from under the terrestrial ball,  
 He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines,  
 And darts his light through every guilty hole,  
 Then murders, treasons, and detested sins,  
 The cloak of night being pluck'd from off their backs,  
 Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves!

*King Richard II.*

DACRE looked in sorrow, not in anger, on the remains of him who had injured him in life, whose very death had seemed to wrong him of the atonement he would have made. But the broken confession gave at least a clew to the object he must endeavour to attain. The letter-case must be now his goal : once possessed of that, he hoped the secret which Harper, with his dying breath, had striven to tell might be discovered ; and he quitted the cottage, to see if Fitzgerald had been more successful in his second search—but Fitzgerald was gone.

Dacre had said when Harper was raving, "Mark well his words, they may be of importance to me." He thought the letter-case might be of importance to Dacre ; and having satisfied himself that it was nowhere in the carriage, he had mounted the postilion's horse, and galloped off in the direction in which the brigands and soldiers had gone before, determined to track their route, and recover, if possible, the possession of the object in question. He had left a pencil note to this effect for Dacre, with one of the soldiers, adding, that he had better return to Rome immediately, and

give notice of all that had happened ; and that he would follow so soon as his pursuit was over.

Dacre determined to abide by this advice, and he also determined upon conveying back the body to Rome, where it might be interred in the English burying-ground. The corpse was replaced in that carriage where but a few hours before it had journeyed on so rapidly—so full of all the busy tide of thought—so urged by all the passions that animate and mislead mankind. Dacre found, on his arrival at Rome, that Fitzgerald was not yet returned, and he began to be alarmed, lest in his anxiety to render him a service, any disaster should have befallen him in the pursuit.

The following day relieved him from his anxiety. Fitzgerald returned. He had succeeded in tracking the soldiers, on their return from the attack on the brigands, who had retired to the mountains. Two had been made prisoners by the soldiers, and they had also succeeded in recovering the lost booty ; but no letter-case was to be found : it must either have been lost on the way, or never been taken with the other things. The prisoners were examined on the subject, and both declared that no such thing had been seen by them, though to their care had been entrusted the stolen contents of the carriage.

Dacre requested Fitzgerald would be silent as to his anxiety concerning this letter-case. He was desirous that nothing should transpire on the subject till he had written himself to Crofton. He had hoped to be acquainted with the secret contained in the lost case, before he imparted to him the circumstances attending the death of Harper. Harper had, in truth, shaken his confidence in the friendship of Crofton ; and he hoped it might be either restored, or utterly broken by the discovery of this secret. The doubt was more distressing than the worst reality. Harper was buried according to the rites of the English Church, and Dacre and Fitzgerald followed him to the grave ; and buried with the senseless corpse all enmity for the wrongs they had received at his hands—for wrongs they had both received, though widely different in degree and kind.

Further delay now seemed useless ; and Dacre determined to transmit to Crofton the " plain unvarnished tale "

of all that had occurred—of the contents of Harry Molesworth's letter—of Mrs. Shepherd's statement—of his interview with Harper the following morning—of Harper's immediate flight—his broken confession, and subsequent death.

It was with this intention that he had set himself down to write when his servant entered to inform him, that on the return of Mr. Harper's carriage from the funeral, an accident had occurred. Another vehicle had run against it—and it was so much damaged that it had been with difficulty corded up sufficiently to be brought back to the place where it stood. The person to whose care it was confided had sent to request Dacre would look at it immediately, lest any blame should be imputed to him for the injuries it had sustained.

Dacre accompanied his servant to the *remise*. Whilst examining the effects of the accident, a small projection at the bottom of the carriage attracted Dacre's attention. It struck him as unusual, and he speculated on its probable utility. He opened the carriage-door, and tried to ascertain within for what use it was intended. He removed the carpet on the floor which was fastened down with a long brass pin. On lifting it up, a piece of oil cloth, painted like wood, was to be seen: that also he raised; and then a lock and a little door were discovered. Round Harper's neck had been found a chain and keys. Dacre possessed those keys. He instantly returned to his house—fetched them—and applied one after another to the lock, but in vain. At last he came to one that entered easily. He turned it—the door opened—and within the well was discovered—the lost letter-case!

Dacre hurried back to his house with a feverish impatience, to possess himself of the secret which Harper had confessed would be found in that case. He forbade all visitors, rushed to his room, locked the door, and in a few minutes more he held in his hand the packet which contained all that was wanting to convince him of the treachery and villany of Harper, if not of Crofton.

The miniature of his father, which had served to deceive poor Mr. Wakefield, was there: a small and ill-executed likeness of a young woman, with dark eyes and

complexion, was also there ; and at the back were written the initials, I. D. Dacre could not doubt it was the portrait of his mother. A letter directed to Lord Hexham, the seal of which was broken, next attracted his attention. He opened it. The letter was from Major Dacre to his brother, written on his journey homewards, when the state of his health had warned him to write what he might not live to tell.

It contained a full account of his first acquaintance with Isabella—of the growth and progress of their attachment—and of their marriage, which had taken place immediately on her arrival at the place to which she had followed him. Whatever reproach she might have merited for her youthful imprudence, in having thus abandoned her home for his sake, he was determined that no other should she deserve, and that her spotless innocence should never be tarnished by any ungenerous advantage being taken of this step. His own love, though tempered by the consideration of those difficulties with which superior age and experience had made him acquainted, had been scarcely less ardent than her own ; and he knew that, by the display and avowal of attachment on his part, he had sanctioned its indulgence on hers. His conduct was determined at once : and their clandestine marriage was instantly solemnized in presence of two confidential witnesses. One was the friend who had been killed soon afterwards in battle ; the other was the servant of that friend : his name was not mentioned in the letter, and Dacre looked eagerly to see if in any other paper that name was mentioned.

To the envelope of the letter was carefully sealed a piece of paper. He opened it : it was the certificate of the marriage, signed by the clergyman, by Major Dacre's friend, Captain Hallett, and by Captain Hallett's foreign servant. Dacre knew, from Lord Hexham's researches, that the clergyman was dead, but this servant might be alive ; and should any living witness be required, his presence might be of consequence ; and Dacre determined to find him, if possible. There were also other letters and papers—some letters of Lord Hexham's to his brother, and a few from Isabella to her husband, when separated from him. One

of these was written on the birthday of their child, beginning thus: "Our little Francis is a year old this day," &c. The date of the month, the year, and the place, was given.

Dacre sat and gazed in speechless, breathless wonder at this strange mass of evidence to prove his right to wealth and honour. Harper's dying words, "Crofton knows all," rang discordantly on his ear. What did Crofton know? Did Crofton know that all he saw before him now was true? or did Crofton know that, notwithstanding all this apparent certainty, some flaw existed in the marriage contract, which would render null these seeming proofs of his legitimacy? His mind revolted at the belief that Crofton would have conspired to defraud him of his rights. He had so often spoken of the pain it gave him to possess what Dacre should have had. He had shown so much interest—so much friendship towards him: he would not at once believe him guilty of such base deceit—such sordid treachery. He resolved to write to him, to state all that had passed—all he had found; and by Crofton's answer he could better judge, than now, the nature and extent of his participation in this act. Till he received that answer, he determined that to none would he impart the discovery of the letter-case, or the nature of its contents.

Crofton received the letter. He knew well that the servant who had lived in Captain Hallett's service was still alive; and that, once possessed of his name, it would be an easy task for Dacre to discover him, and procure his testimony. The man was a foreigner, and had been totally ignorant of the inquiries instituted by Lord Hexham into the evidence of his brother's marriage, or he might then have come forward. For some years past, he had been in Harper's pay to be silent. Under these circumstances, Crofton knew that it would be useless to practise any further deception; and as expediency was his rule of conduct, he did not attempt deceit which he knew would be detected. But expediency had been Crofton's only rule of conduct. He was one who had long mocked with scorn the principles he would not follow, and successfully repelled the conscience which something of a better nature had still left to smite him with remorse. He ridiculed the idea of repentance and reformation as youthful chimeras—he had laughed



at virtue till he believed it ridiculous ; and he sought, in a careless manner and a playful wit, to arm himself against reflection, and protect himself from censure.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

Il est plus honteux de se défier de ses amis que d'en être trompé.

ROCHEFOUCAULT.

DACRE expected, with impatience, Crofton's reply to his letter ; and it came without loss of time. Dacre trembled to open it, for a thousand fears had crossed his mind. He feared that Crofton might be able to prove that the information contained in Harper's case could not be substantiated ; he feared to find the treachery confirmed he now suspected in the man who had professed himself his friend.

The letter began by the acknowledgment of Dacre's, and then came as follows :—

“No man can rejoice in this change in your prospects more than I do ; for if you had not recovered the possession of the property which accident assigned to me, the twelve tribes of Israel would have pitched their tents in Hexham Park. It amuses me beyond measure to think of the amount of money-lending disappointments ; and I shall now have the satisfaction of seeing you where I could not, and where my creditors would have been : so pray don't let any consideration for me mar the pleasure of finding yourself Lord Hexham, with a large unencumbered property. You ask me to what motive I ascribe this desire in Harper to injure you. One should suppose, by the question, that you believed the villain's assertion that I was in his confidence. I told you once how first I became acquainted with him : I took some pains then to discover

who he was, and found that he had begun life as a travelling servant or courier. Perhaps he may have acted in that capacity to your father, and probably did not come honestly by the documents in question, which would at once account for the secrecy he maintained on the subject. But enough of Harper and his rogueries. The brigands have done a righteous deed in ridding us of this low-born wretch; and the least you can do will be to obtain the pardon of all concerned, and to settle a handsome annuity on the man who fired the lucky shot. What shall you do? You must go to England, I suppose, to arrange this affair, establish your title, &c. If you return to the Continent, we shall meet, I dare say; for *nous autres* always do meet on the Continent, though never in England. I start for Sicily to-morrow with a friend: it is an old engagement, or I would have persuaded you to take a run down to Naples, or have returned myself to Rome, before you start for the North, that I might see how your new honours sit upon you. I should have liked to talk over all these strange changes with you; but I was never born to do what I like; so write to me, *caro mio*. How I should like to see the flutter in the *casa* Ashby at hearing of this change of scenes and decorations! I have a great mind to set off directly, to give them the benefit of my 'excellent taste' and 'cultivated mind' upon that bust. How I should like to see their embarrassment at not knowing how to get rid of me, now that I am at a discount! Those people amuse me. *Addio*.

P. S. Should you find, among Harper's papers, any relating to money transactions with me, please to return them to me, as I can best explain their meaning; and, of course, should any such be found, you will not mention their contents, for it is a bore to have one's private affairs delivered over as public food for gossip and slander."

Dacre closed the letter, and threw it on one side. His suspicions that Crofton had been privy to the concealment practised by Harper, had been lately strengthened, though not established; and there was nothing in the light tone of Crofton's letter that convinced him of his innocence—nothing that disposed him to discredit the declaration of the dying Harper, or the evidence of certain memorandums which he had found since writing to Crofton. Not only

were some of these in Harper's, and others in Crofton's handwriting, concerning the payment of large sums ; but also a letter of Crofton's promising to increase a yearly stipend to Harper, was discovered in the letter-case. Dacre took copies of all these papers, and transmitted them without comment to Crofton. But whatever were Dacre's suspicions, they did not then amount to proof ; and though he now no longer concealed from others all he had discovered respecting himself, to none did he give a hint of his belief in Crofton's participation of guilt.

Dacre's suspicions were indeed most just, and in time he knew they were so. Mrs. Shepherd had been irritated by Harper refusing to repay the money she had procured for him from Mr. Wakefield ; and in hopes of obtaining from the Molesworths the full amount of her late master's legacy, she had consented to make a still further confession of the schemes of Harper and herself. This confession was transmitted by Harry to Dacre, and, with the corroborative testimony of Harper's papers, the mystery was now unravelled, that had so long perplexed him, and in which his own fate had been so deeply concerned.

It was quite true that Harper had lived with Major Dacre, in the capacity described by Crofton : and Crofton knew that he had done so. It was also true that Harper had not come honestly by the documents he had possessed. The languid state of Major Dacre's health had induced him to allow Harper occasional access, in his presence, to the desk in which his money was kept. Harper knew that it contained a considerable sum, and also some trinkets of value. Major Dacre died—Lord Hexham knew nothing of his brother's effects. The opportunity was tempting. Harper placed a sufficient sum in a portfolio, to avoid the danger of suspicion ; and then possessing himself of the more valuable desk, he made good his escape, under pretext of seeking if more of Major Dacre's property was to be found or whether it had been taken by the enemy. He wrote to Lord Hexham a true and detailed account of the capture of the baggage belonging to some of Major Dacre's regiment. Lord Hexham was well satisfied with his statement, and never bestowed another thought on the man who

had thus possessed himself of the knowledge he so diligently sought elsewhere.

Harper had now grown comparatively rich ; and for a length of time he dwelt wherever he was most sure of not being recognized, and indulged in the pleasures of gaming, to which he had always been strongly addicted. The documents which so deeply concerned Dacre remained in his hands. Their possession had formed no part of his scheme in taking away the desk in which they had been placed ; for it was not till after some little time had he even discovered their existence. But he could not restore them without exciting suspicion of the manner in which they had been obtained ; and he was unwilling to destroy them, lest any opportunity should offer of turning into matter of profit their restoration to the family.

In time he returned to England, where his sister was residing as housekeeper to Mr. Wakefield. Her character for honesty having been somewhat tarnished, she had changed her name to that of Shepherd. It was Harper's idea to impose upon Mr. Wakefield the tale of Lieutenant Harrison's existence and death ; for he hoped that, when once his sister's grade in life was raised, the weak old man might be induced to share his wealth with her as his wife. The portrait of Major Dacre and Isabella had both been given into her care by Harper, and it occurred to her that the display of this miniature would strengthen Mr. Wakefield's belief in her story : and in that she was right ; though so great was her power, that to have doubted her word would scarcely have entered his mind.

Harper became known as a frequenter of races and gaming-houses ; and it was, as Crofton truly said, upon one of these occasions that their acquaintance commenced. Crofton lost a considerable sum to Harper : Harper insisted on payment. Crofton declared it had been unfairly won, and threatened to expose him if he persisted in his demand. Harper hinted at the possession of a secret that merited his attention ; and after all the cautious preambles which men of their respective characters were sure to exercise previous to the conclusion of a compact, it ended in Crofton not only paying the sum he had lost to Harper, but entering

into an agreement to pay him a considerable income, should Dacre not inherit on the death of Lord Hexham. Lord Hexham died—Harper possessed the only proof extant of the legitimacy of Francis Dacre—and Crofton fulfilled his engagement.

It was to the accidental discovery, by Dacre, of the portrait of his father, that the Molesworths were indebted for the assistance of Mr. Wakefield. It was by Harper's advice that Mrs. Shepherd seemingly forwarded their wishes; for he feared lest Dacre and the Molesworths should become suspicious of her power, and, if irritated against her, might seek either to displace her, or to prosecute inquiries respecting the picture which would be far from agreeable to himself. It has already been told how little Mrs. Shepherd had intended that Mr. Wakefield should fulfil his promise to his niece. Harper and his sister agreed that her having assumed Shepherd as her maiden name, made it expedient that they should now pass for cousins. It was to his house that Mr. Wakefield went for change of air, just when Mrs. Shepherd wished to avoid the risk of his seeing more of Dacre than either she or Harper desired; and it was then that she restored to her brother the miniature which had been given to her care; and it was for him that, under pretence of a loan, she obtained money from Mr. Wakefield.

It appeared from the perusal of some of those papers of which Dacre had furnished Crofton with a copy, that since the time of Dacre's arrival at Rome, Harper had become more exacting in his demands; and though no mention in writing was made of the grounds on which an advance was claimed, it seemed likely that it was in consequence of some threatened betrayal to Dacre; and it now occurred to him, that the probable object of Harper's flight to Naples might have been to see whether fresh terms, still more advantageous to himself than those he had proposed to Dacre, could be exacted from Crofton, if allowed to remain in possession of the Hexham estate.

It was a sickening tissue of deceit and fraud that Dacre thus unravelled; but this was a time to act as well as think. Measures were successfully adopted to discover the only living witness of the marriage of his parents, and to secure

his presence in England should his testimony be required. Dacre wrote to Harry Molesworth, to the Duke of Bolton, and to his lawyer, informing them of the proofs he now possessed of his legitimacy, and asking their advice on the steps that should be taken to establish the truth of the information he had obtained of his real position.

It need hardly be told how kindly Mrs. Ashby and her daughters rejoiced at this accession of honour and wealth to their old friend Mr. Dacre; but still, in spite of all their friendly sympathy, Mrs. Ashby could scarcely conceal from herself the painful truth, that with neither Julia nor Cecilia was there the slightest appearance of increasing flirtation. It was very strange—very irritating—very disappointing—and she felt the more vexed, because it might have been all her own fault. Had she but sooner understood his tastes, and encouraged a greater intimacy with Cecilia than with Julia, her plan might have succeeded. Now she foresaw that he would return to England; and so much time had been lost in endeavouring to persuade him that her eldest daughter was just the person to suit him, that there would be none left to insure the success of the youngest. She trembled each day for the announcement of his departure, and could only hope the affecting hour of parting might work some good in the prospects of one or other of her daughters.

But poor Mrs. Ashby was here again doomed to disappointment. No leave-taking took place. Dacre suddenly determined to hasten to England. Fitzgerald was charged with the adieus he should have made in person to the Ashbys, and to others; and he quitted Rome with a heart bounding anew with love and hope, to fly to her, from whom his heart—nay, his very thoughts, had never for a moment strayed.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Oh! many a shaft at random sent,  
 Finds mark the archer little meant;  
 And many a word at random spoken,  
 May soothe or wound a heart that's broken.

WALTER SCOTT.

THE Duke of Bolton was far away from London at the time when Dacre's letter had arrived, and it was some time before it reached him. The Molesworths, having determined not to await Dacre's reply to their offer of joining him on the Continent, had left England on their way to Italy when his letter to Harry arrived. It was therefore only from the lawyer that he received an answer to his questions of what steps should be taken to establish his rights. The lawyer strongly recommended his immediate return to England. Dacre shuddered at the thoughts of returning where Emily dwelt, to be within daily, perhaps hourly, reach of her, and yet not to see her; or to see her, and to endure the altered mien, the averted glance, of her who had once confessed the love he must never hope to win again, was a trial that he dreaded. He thought it more than he could bear, and he almost regretted the very circumstance which now seemed to impose as a duty his return to England.

Another letter lay upon his table, still unopened: the hand had not attracted his attention: he had thrown it aside whilst taking up that of the lawyer, and others; and, lost in thought after reading their contents, he forgot for awhile this neglected epistle. On opening it, he found, to his surprise, that it was from Sir Edward Bradford. He had never before received a letter from him, and its pos-

sible object filled his mind with alarm. He quickly read it; his face glowed—his eyes kindled—a tremor of agitation ran through his frame—the letter fell to the ground—he clasped his hands together, and in a tone of fervent gratitude exclaimed, “Thank God! then she may yet be mine.”

The purport of Sir Edward’s letter was, indeed, most friendly. He confessed that Dacre’s declaration that Lady Emily was still free, had emboldened him to seek her affection: he told him how his hopes had been checked upon his first attempt to declare his feelings towards her, but that, encouraged by the friendliness of Lady Kendal, and deceived by his own wishes, he had explained himself more fully to Lady Emily in London, and that the result had been a death-blow to his hopes. He had told Lady Emily, that unless her heart was engaged to another, he would still hope that perseverance might win her consent; but she had felt in honour bound to discourage the false hopes to which her silence would have given rise. She had partly allowed that her heart was already bestowed; but this half confession had been made with such extreme agitation, and with the expression of feelings so melancholy, that it was impossible to doubt but that, from some unaccountable circumstance, she who seemed born to give happiness to others, had lost her own. He then told Dacre his reasons for believing that he was the object of her affections.

Dacre could not doubt that her love, at least, was still his. He had once thought in bitterness, that his birth might have influenced her decision; now he clung with hope to that idea. The change in his situation gained fresh value in his eyes; and before another day and night had passed, his journey homeward was commenced.

Numerous, various, and contradictory were the reports that reached England concerning the circumstances attending the death of Harper, and the altered position of Dacre. Some declared that a duel had been the result between him and Crofton, for that Crofton had been privy to the deceit of Harper: and others said that it was solely owing to Crofton’s magnanimity that a confession was wrung from Harper; and that Dacre had, in return for his kindness,



generously shared with him the Hexham estate. The only point on which the truth seemed known, was, that Dacre had obtained proofs of his legitimacy, and that measures were about to be taken to establish his claim to the title.

Lady Kendal and Emily were in London when the news of this event arrived ; but as Lady Kendal never went into company, and Emily but seldom, it had been a topic of conversation for two or three days before it reached their knowledge. For a time, Emily had entirely declined mixing in society, but she saw that Lady Kendal wished her to do so : she saw it gave her pain, to witness this perseverance in a change of habits as well as spirits ; and, to comply with her wishes, she occasionally consented to mingle in scenes which afforded her no other pleasure than that of making a sacrifice of her own feelings to those of her mother.

A concert was to be given at the house of a friend. Emily's taste for music had outlived the many others she had lost ; and she always preferred going where she could be least called upon to take part in conversation. Accordingly it was arranged that Emily should go, under the *chaperonage* of a near relation, to whose care, Lady Kendal always confided her upon such occasions ; and to the concert they went.

Emily had not long been there, when Mr. Maitland accosted her.

"I am glad to see you out again, Lady Emily," said he ; "I wish it was not so rarely that we were allowed to catch a glimpse of you, now, in the world."

Emily was annoyed at this remark on a change which had been produced by circumstances so painful, and she made but little reply. Mr. Maitland tried one or two other topics ; then remembering the news of the day, he said—

"I suppose you have heard all this marvellous story of a Mr. Harper, and my old friend Crofton, and Dacre. You remember Dacre, don't you ?" continued he ; and he looked at her as he spoke.

Mr. Maitland had never been able to make out whether that flirtation between Dacre and Lady Emily had meant, as he said, anything or nothing ; and he thought the pre-

sent a good opportunity to see if she changed countenance at the mention of all that had happened.

"You remember Dacre, don't you?" What a question to be asked! What a question to be answered! by her on whose heart his image was so deeply engraven. The inquisitive look and tone in which Mr. Maitland had thus dared to touch upon the chord which vibrated through every nerve—the thought that he would pry into the feeling she preserved in sacred secrecy—gave her spirit to reply. She was offended, and it gave her strength to say, with seeming calmness, that she did remember him, and that she knew nothing of the story to which he alluded.

Mr. Maitland was delighted to find some one to whom he could retail the story he had almost feared was by this time known to all.

"Where have you been, Lady Emily?" said he: "why, all London has talked of nothing else for the last twenty-four hours. Dacre turns out, after all, to be Lord Hexham:" and he then proceeded to give her what he thought the most authentic version of this strange tale.

But Emily heard but little of it: she had heard enough to know that her engagement need never have been broken to remember it could never be renewed—and to know that happiness was now gone, without the supporting comfort that a daughter's duty had been done. She commanded herself till Mr. Maitland moved on to speak to another; then complaining of the heat of the room, she begged her chaperon would allow her to go home. The carriage was called; but it was early in the evening, and she persuaded the lady, therefore, to return to the concert-room, whilst she went home alone. She accompanied Emily to the stairs, and then consented to return.

Emily said "Home," and threw herself back in the carriage. The carriage arrived at Lady Kendal's. The door was opened—the steps were let down—but Lady Emily moved not. The footman said, "The door is open, my lady," but no answer was returned. He looked in, to see if she had heard him; but it was too late: Emily could neither hear nor see. He called the porter who had opened the house door: they lifted her from the carriage, and she was carried senseless to her room.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

To wilful men,  
The injuries that they themselves procure,  
Must be their schoolmaster.

*King Lear.*

Poor wounded heart!  
Poor wounded heart, farewell!  
Thy hour is come,  
Thy hour of rest is come;  
Thou soon wilt reach thy home,  
Poor wounded heart, farewell!  
The pain thou'lt feel in breaking,  
Less bitter far will be  
Than that long deadly course of aching,  
This life has been to thee.

MOORE.

DACRE journeyed rapidly on. A ray of hope had penetrated the deep gloom which had so long enveloped his prospects, and it gave an impetus to his movements. He fondly thought that Adversity had done her worst—he vainly hoped that he who had suffered so much, should suffer no more.

There is often a tendency to superstition when the feelings are strongly excited. We mistake our wishes for foreknowledge—we misconstrue our fears into presentiments. When we have seen the tide of sorrow rise and swell,—when we have watched it reaching, in succession, every point to which we looked for happiness, and with its dark waters effacing or destroying all it meets, till nought is left before us but the dreary prospect of its troubled waves,—we know that it has reached its height, and we can gaze on its gloomy sameness with the calmness of despair; but now the overwhelming tide has ebbed

again, we catch a glimpse of some lost joy—of some concealed hope; and fancy, which o'ersteps the bounds of truth, restores at once the picture as it stood before. One object has sufficed to kindle sanguine thoughts—to recall the view we feared was lost for ever. We think that, as the waters of affliction came, so will they depart; but it cannot be—some trace of their existence they will surely leave behind—something we prized will have been changed, removed, destroyed; something will be missing in the gay landscape of unalloyed bliss, and sadness will succeed to the place where it stood. The horizon may be unclouded; the flood may retire, but it never can—it never will be forgotten.

Such visitations do not come in vain—they may wash away impurities, they may fertilize the soil on which they flowed; virtues may spring up where vice, in all its rankness, grew; they may have forced upon the mind unbidden thoughts—unwelcome truths. We know not all they may have wrought; but some monument of power will be left, something indelible will remain to shake our trust in earthly joys.

Perhaps it was the lengthened depression which Dacre had endured, which made his heart so unusually rebound with the sanguine hope of brightened prospects. How willingly imagination lends itself to cheat our reason! Dacre thought on all the vexations, and disappointments, and sorrows, to which he had been subjected since the day on which his uncle had first disclosed to him the secret of his birth; and he pleased himself by now tracing all to that cause. Reason might have reminded him that, before that period, his youth had guarded him from all but childish woes, but reason was silenced by the delusive pleasure of believing that his sufferings had sprung only from a cause which had now ceased to exist. Vain hope! We think only of the miseries that fate has awarded: we bury those in oblivion which we create for ourselves.

Dacre had gone through so much excitement and fatigue of late, that his progress was at length arrested by illness; and for two or three days he was delayed at Milan, and his journey was performed less rapidly from thence to Geneva.

At Geneva he determined to rest two days, and then proceed, without again stopping, to England.

It was late in the afternoon when Dacre was sitting at the window of the inn at Secheron, and looking with admiration on the scene of grandeur and repose that was before him. The reflected mountain now seemed as though it strove to fathom the deep lake below: and on its placid surface lay the lengthened shadows of declining day. There was stillness in the air—stillness that could be felt; and the flight and chirp of birds, the buzz of the fly, and the hum of the bee, came distinctly on the ear. It was a stillness which the sound of voices, of the distant bell, the joyous whistle, and the merry laugh, served rather to mark than to destroy. At another time Dacre would have feared it was the stillness which heralds the approaching thunder-cloud; but now he dwelt on it as the type of peaceful, noiseless joys.

A distant splash of oars was heard, and Dacre unconsciously watched the gradual nearing of that pleasing sound. At length the boat appeared in sight; and now the voices of the boatmen calling to those who awaited them on shore, proclaimed the intention of the passengers to land at the inn. Dacre watched their movements, and then the beauty of the lake tempted him to quit his window, and saunter to the place where the passengers had landed, to see if any boat was to be hired; but none was to be found, and, after a short stroll, he returned to his room.

On re-entering it he was startled at finding a large letter upon his table. The cover was directed in Fitzgerald's hand, and in the envelope was written as follows:—

"The enclosed arrived but two days after your departure. The bearer, who is a friend of mine, is returning to England by the route you proposed, and, as he is in haste, will probably overtake you. Should he not do so before he reaches Geneva, he is to forward the packet from thence to England, according to the direction you left with me."

Dacre did not stop to look at the direction of the enclosure. It was a thick letter, sealed with black; and, as he opened it, another letter fell on the floor. He picked it up, and was startled by the sight of his own handwriting. An instant more, and the blood rushed to his face; his

head swam, and he could scarcely breathe. Ere a line was read, he saw that the letter he held was from Emily Somers; and he could scarcely compose himself sufficiently to read a word on which he thought his fate would depend.

The letter was as follows:—

“Once more I have determined to write to you. All will be over ere you can receive this letter, and the time will then be come for you no longer to remain in ignorance of the motives by which my conduct has been actuated. If, when you know all, you still think me wrong, forgive me, dearest Francis! If you think me justified, let the memory of our mutual love be held in sacred peace within your heart. Let it not disturb the happiness of your future life; let it not cast a gloom over the prospects that may still lie before you; but let it be cherished as a blessed relic of the past.

“I return you the last letter I shall probably ever receive from you. I would I had never received it! but it must now be answered. Your conjecture is right. The unfortunate circumstance attending your birth is the cause of all the misery I have endured—of what is worse, of all I have inflicted; but it was not kind of you to suppose that such a sacrifice would have been made, had it not been demanded by the most imperious duty. You think that I have given you up for some imaginary principle of right; and you think, that had I loved you as I am beloved, I would not thus have abandoned you. You thought that my dear father, having died in ignorance of our love, could not have imposed this sad duty on his child. I enclose you the letter that was found in his will.

“Could I have acted otherwise than I did? I thought I ought not, and I feared to tell any but my mother of the cause that determined my conduct, lest they should differ in opinion, and that my wishes should yield what conviction refused. Yes, dearest! I was silent; for I feared my own weakness. It was hard to struggle with myself: had another struggled against me, I might have fallen—fallen from what I deemed the only path of duty. If I have erred in judgment, may the deep misery I have suffered be accepted as my atonement.

"Your last letter cost me bitter tears—tears of hopeless sorrow. Yet, how can I wonder at the feelings you express! condemned unheard, you had a right to conjecture, you had a right to blame. Perhaps I acted too much to the letter, too little in the spirit, of my father's wishes. Caroline has now seen his letter: and, to her mind it appeared clear, that, though respect for a parent's opinion might have justified the breaking off our engagement, the knowledge of his affectionate wish for my welfare would have justified its renewal, when neither time nor effort had succeeded in restoring to my heart the happiness he wished me to enjoy. But it is too late: your letter forbids even now the wish to be convinced by such arguments as these.

"With what anguish of mind have I turned to that passage of your letter, which confirmed the sentence I had passed upon myself. You say, 'If my conjecture is right do not reply. Your silence will tell me that I am despised for what I cannot alter. Your silence will tell me that, though my heart should break under the trial, I ought not to become your husband, if rejected for such a cause. No, Emily! even could fate now change her cruel decree,—could she at this instant remove the stigma of illegitimacy—I ought not to claim the love of a wife in her who has despised me.'

"Dearest Francis, I thought the cup of bitterness was filled; but it was reading this that made it overflow: and yet, how can I wonder that such should have been your feelings! Perhaps I deserved that you should thus think of me. Truth compelled my silence: for your conjecture was right, that it was owing to the unhappy circumstances of your birth that our engagement was broken; and my silence must have confirmed you in the belief that I had entertained towards you thoughts that would have made me unworthy of your love. But I cannot die and let you live in error. Now you will understand all: your letter pained me; still I could well enter into the feelings by which it was dictated, but I could not bear it should be seen by others. They might not have felt as I felt towards you; and had they wronged you for the expressions it contained, it would have added to my grief.

None but myself have seen it—none but ourselves know even of its existence. I have strongly on my mind the impression that my weary existence will soon end: I wish to live, at least so long as Heaven will spare my mother; but, should she survive me, comfort her in her desolation. She will be soothed by the kindness of one her child so dearly loved. Sorrow wears the health as well as spirits, and I have a presentiment that mine will be an early grave. But you will not then blame me; you will pity me when death has closed the trials of my life. When you read this, you will know that, though my heart was broken, that my love was unshaken, undiminished. My latest prayer will be for you.

"I have an unwillingness to bring this letter to a close; for it is the last communion I can hold with you on earth. But still, that word 'farewell' must come. May Heaven forgive the sin of having loved one so dearly of mortal birth! I fear it may have been too like idolatry. But this is weakness. I have said all that I would have you know—still I linger. It is another parting when I say farewell; and yet I know that when you read that word, my heart will feel no sympathy with the sorrow I have caused—I know that the hand which now quivers with the emotion of grief will no longer tremble for you. This letter can only reach you when I am no more. It will be the messenger of death; but it will tell you that I have rested from the trials and sorrows of life. Farewell! God protect you, and support you under the blow it will inflict!"

"Oh God! she is dead!" exclaimed Dacre: "I have murdered her!" said he, starting wildly forward; and, as he fell to the ground, his agony was suspended for awhile, by the loss of consciousness and power.

But again he awoke to life and misery—misery that seemed too deep for man's endurance. Emily! the fond—the bright—the beautiful—joyous Emily! Emily, on whose dimpling cheek the gay smile of cheerful innocence had played! whose fairy step had marked the elasticity of happiness and youth—Emily, the very type of all that would make life seem beautiful, was dead—she had become a cold, senseless corpse. The power of feeling and of motion gone. Dacre thought on that dreadful day, when



for a moment he had feared the reality he now mourned. So had she looked, perhaps, when death had robbed her image of the pure spirit which had illumined her face ; and now her very image must have been swept from off the surface of the earth : she must be now the mute inhabitant of the narrow cell where decay will follow to the stroke of death—ay ! the loveliest form in which the human soul was ever clad must now to dust return. There was despair and desolation in the thought. Her decease was not the ghastly tribute which disease too often pays to death : she had sunk beneath the weight of mental woe ; and Dacre knew that he had added to the burthen which had bowed her to the earth.

Why do we lay up for ourselves the bitterest aggravation to all sorrow ? Why do we ever forget that no evil is so great, so irremediable, so incurable, as that which springs from self-reproach. Dacre thought he could have borne with resignation and fortitude even this tremendous blow, had he but been free from this added wretchedness. But he did not, and he could not, spare himself from the remorse to which the reperusal of his own letter had given rise.

The habitual fault of his character had prevailed in a moment of disappointment and grief. He had never checked that over-sensitiveness which had been the offspring of untoward circumstances, and it had gained the mastery over reason and justice when his mind was wrought upon by the despair of blighted hopes. Mortifications, sometimes real and more often imaginary, had disposed him to think of insult or contempt where none had been either felt or intended, and to resent as truth the creation of his fancy.

In his never-ending speculations as to the cause of Emily's conduct, it occurred to him that his birth might in some way have influenced her decision. Perhaps she had remembered having heard her father express some slighting opinion of those who were situated similarly to himself ; and had relied only upon his fondness to waive a prejudice that would mar her happiness. Perhaps that death had now hallowed even his prejudices in her mind, and that she shrank from an alliance which he would have

despised. He thought she might have been encouraged by Lady Kendal in this cruel token of respect to the possible sentiments of her father; and that she herself would soon, if she did not already, share the opinions she so scrupulously followed and respected.

Thoughts like these pressed sorely on a point, on which his sensitiveness was so acutely alive; he worked himself up to think, that, if rejected on that account, he ought no longer to wish to shake her resolution; and, galled by the irritation of wounded feelings, and disappointed affection, he addressed to her, on the night before he left England, the letter that had been now returned to him. It was written under feelings of great excitement; and he was not aware, till he reperused it, how strongly it had been worded. Her silence had, it is true, confirmed him in the belief that his conjecture had been right; but he could not doubt, from the accounts he had received from Harry Molesworth, that her love towards him was unchanged. The feelings of irritation under which he had written had been quelled by his confidence in her unbounded love, and by the settled gloom which hung upon his mind; and, ere circumstances had made him look with hope to the idea that he had been right in his surmise, he had forgotten that he had sealed the bar to any change in her, by the declaration contained in his letter.

Now the frightful truth rushed upon him. The faults that are not hourly watched, and held in check, will assail us in our weakness, when, overpowered by emotions that have shaken reason from its hold, we are at the mercy of the prevailing error of our minds. Dacre now saw that he had been unkind—nay worse, he had been unjust—and unjust to whom? to Emily! The pangs of self-reproach pierced him to the heart, and told him how sadly, how greatly, it is in the power of man to add to the afflictions which come from Heaven.

Dacre sat for hours in the fixed and tearless agony, which finds no vent for sorrow; and the stupor which succeeds intensity of thought at length usurped the place of sleep. It was morning; and the entrance of his servant, to awake him at the accustomed hour, startled him into the recol-

lection that the night was past, and that he had not been in bed. The servant was alarmed at his appearance, and asked if he was ill. Dacre replied in the negative, and desired that everything should be instantly prepared for the continuance of their journey. Emily had told him to comfort her mother in her desolation, and he blessed her for the injunction. It seemed as if something yet remained for him to do in life: yes, there was something to live for when a wish of hers had yet to be fulfilled; and he would fly to that bereaved widow, who had outlived the partner of her choice, and who had survived the child on whom she leaned for comfort and support: their feelings would be in unison—they could sympathize in thoughts and sorrow known and felt by few.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

Oft expectation fails, and most oft there  
Where most it promises; and oft it hits  
Where hope is coldest, and despair most sits.

*All's Well that Ends Well.*

DACRE's journey was rapid: he thought not of rest, for he knew there was no rest for him; and day and night he travelled on. Every arrangement was left to his servant: scarcely a word passed his lips, from the hour in which he had learnt the dreadful tidings of her death: not a book was opened; no object could for a moment cheat his mind of grief, for the vision of Emily was never absent from his thoughts: Emily in life—Emily in death, was ever before him; and, ere another day and night were over, his countenance bore the deep traces of sorrow that would dispute with time their power to mark and alter man.

The desire to avoid all accidental meetings with any of

his acquaintance, determined him to avoid Paris, and to cross from Dieppe to Brighton. It was late in the day when he landed; the weather was not propitious, and there were but few to watch the landing of the passengers. Dacre was walking up the beach when he perceived two or three servants dressed in livery, which he well remembered, and which, indeed, was too peculiar to be easily forgotten. As he looked towards them, one of them touched his hat: it was the same footman who had lived with the Duchess of Bolton, at the time when he had been a daily visitor at Bolton House; and the man recognized him. Dacre approached him, and inquired if the duchess was at Brighton. The servant said yes, and told him where she lived.

"Can you tell me," continued Dacre, almost choking as he spoke; "can you tell me where Lady Kendal is?"

"My lady is here also," replied another servant who stood within hearing. The servant was dressed in deep mourning.

"I hope Lady Kendal is well," said Dacre, scarcely able to sustain himself as he asked the question.

"Her ladyship is as well as can be expected," replied the same man.

Dacre walked on. How revolting to him appeared that cold conventional reply, that serves alike to screen the mimic woe which custom has compelled, and to shroud the sufferings that would shrink from notice. Dacre had proceeded but a very few steps when the Duchess of Bolton's servant followed him, saying, "Her Grace is at home, I believe, sir, if you wish to see her."

Dacre paused for a moment. He doubted whether he could command himself at once sufficiently for such an interview; but he knew by past experience the kindness he was sure to meet with from her. Delay could give no comfort. He inquired the way to the duchess's house, and then followed the servant who offered to show it him. The footman had knocked at the door: Dacre saw it open; saw him speak to the servant who had opened it. He saw that he was to be admitted, and he almost repented his resolution of thus calling upon the duchess without preparation. He knew how deeply she would have grieved, how

affectionately she would have mourned the loss of Emily ; and he feared the sight of him might too rudely renew feelings she must have endured ; but it was too late to retreat. The duchess was at home—he mounted the stairs—the drawing-room door was thrown open—his name was announced. The duchess was not there. The servant instantly retreated to seek for her in the adjoining apartment. He advanced a few steps in the room : a lady was reclining on the sofa. She turned her head on hearing him advance. A shriek of surprise burst from her lips. She sprang to her feet ; and Dacre held in his arms the living, though now the hardly conscious, Emily !

“ Can this be true ? ” said Dacre, in a low, hurried voice ; and he gazed upon her, as though he doubted the reality of what he saw. “ Emily ! speak to me, dearest ! tell me it is not a dream ! ”

“ Did you, then, receive a letter ? ” said Emily, withdrawing herself from his hold.

“ I did—I did ! ” replied Dacre ; “ and, oh ! the misery I have endured ! ” and he covered his face with his hands, as though he would have hid from his view the recollection of his suffering.

Emily burst into tears. “ What must you think of me ? ” said she. “ That letter was never meant to reach you till I had breathed my last.”

“ Have you been in danger ? ” inquired Dacre, looking anxiously on her pale but lovely countenance.

“ Yes,” replied Emily, “ they thought my recovery hopeless ; but it was no fault of mine that you received that letter. Under the excitement of fever, my mind dwelt on that letter. I told my mother and Caroline that it must be sent to you. At first they thought it was delirium ; but I told them where to find it, and they looked for it. They found it where I had said : they found it directed to you, with an injunction that it should be opened by none but yourself ; and they determined to forward it to you. It was not till some days after it was gone, that I was sufficiently myself to understand the dreadful error I had committed.”

Dacre folded her to his heart : but there was no time for reply, for the duchess was already in the room.

The tale of joy is soon told; and it needed but few words in explanation of the happiness he had brought with his return. Emily quitted the room, to prepare her mother for this sudden change. Dacre related to the duchess his meeting with her footman, and the alarming confirmation of his belief in Emily's death, which was afforded by the dress and answer of Lady Kendal's servant.

"The Dowager Lady Kendal is recently dead," replied the duchess; "and I suppose he gave you the unmeaning answer which he had been desired to give to those who send for form, and not information."

The duke and Lady Kendal returned: but we must not intrude upon the happiness of that group; it was too new—too pure—too deep—for vulgar gaze.

The news arrived at Rome of the intended marriage of Dacre and Lady Emily Somers. And how did Mrs. Ashby bear this downfall to her maternal schemes? Like an able general, she made a skilful retreat. She smiled, and said the marriage was hardly news to them. The plan succeeded; and malicious gossips were deceived and discomfited to find that, instead of "the forsaken," Miss Ashby was the "confidante."

Cecilia was allowed, unchecked, to flirt with young Fitzgerald; and, unlike George Saville, he wound up matters by the offer of his empty hand. Mrs. Ashby sincerely regretted that it was so empty, but she rejoiced to think that half her labours would be over if one of the girls were married: and so she talked disinterestedly; declaimed against worldliness; and, with all possible attention to the bridal costume, and with tears in her eyes to think how long it might be ere Julia would follow her sister's example, she witnessed the solemnization of her daughter's marriage at the house of the British Minister at Naples.

From Crofton, Dacre received a letter of congratulation. Of the papers he had sent him he made no mention; but the letter was replete with good wishes for his happiness, and Dacre was too happy to be angry.

Crofton was indeed one of those against whom it was difficult to feel the full indignation that his conduct deserved. He was totally devoid of honour; but he was clever—he

was amusing—and he was good-natured. A want of principle had made him extravagant, and the distress arising from his reckless course had made him unscrupulous; but with Dacre he had been often sincere in his expressions of regard. The luxurious sensualist is, of necessity, selfish; and, though he would have done anything else to serve him, he could not afford to be honest, as *that* would have cost the sacrifice of self. But concealment was over; and, as Crofton was too much accustomed to transactions of at least a doubtful character to look with much shame on those with Harper, and as he was too much hampered with engagements and debts to regret the property he must forego, he really was glad that honour and wealth should have fallen upon Dacre. Dacre replied to his letter, and there their intercourse ended. No arrears were demanded, and Crofton found a yearly sum was paid anonymously into his banker's hands for his use. He did not inquire from whence it came; and none but himself, the banker, and the person by whom it was given, knew of its payment.

But we must return to England, and see how other of our friends have received the intelligence of the approaching marriage. Sir Edward Bradford was the first to whom Dacre announced the glad tidings of his joy, and Sir Edward sympathized with the disinterested kindness of a generous mind. He had so entirely given up all hopes of success for himself, that he had now almost ceased to think of Emily with the feelings of a lover; and Mrs. Wentworth is not without hope that her brother has turned his thoughts elsewhere. Who will not rejoice at his enjoyment of the domestic ties he so well deserved?

Lady Whitby is quite satisfied; for, since Mr. Dacre has become Lord Hénham, she feels the elevation to Miss Ashby would have been too great.

Mr. Maitland is just come from the conveyancer; and, having nearly ascertained the particulars of the settlement, he is going his rounds to impart as truth in detail his partial information.

Lady Henry Mansel has addressed a most useful letter to Emily, containing the names and addresses of all the

*Marchandes de modes* "to whom one can really trust for taste and judgment;" and Mr. Preston has offered to assist Dacre in the choice of the jewels, of which, without vanity, he piques himself on being somewhat of a connoisseur.

Lady Anne has said all that is most flattering on the occasion to the parties concerned—all that is least so to others. Lord Clermont is just about to be married. And, alas ! Lady Anne begins to be soured by the continual mortifications to which her vanity gives rise.

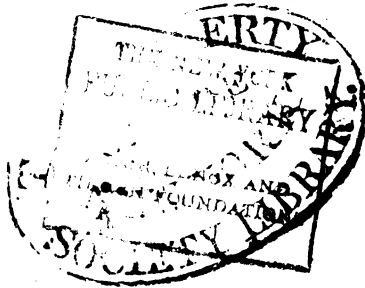
The time approaches when the ceremony is to be performed, and the Molesworths are daily expected. It was fortunate that Dacre's name had been duly inscribed by his servant in the *Livre des Voyageurs* ; for it was thus the Molesworths first learnt that one of that name had passed through on his way from Italy ; and they determined to proceed no further till they could ascertain whether Dacre had really returned to England. The duchess had written to Mary ; and her letter at once decided the doubt, and determined their movements. And now the Molesworths are added to the wedding guests, who await with friendly impatience the union of Dacre and Emily.

The day is fixed, the hour come ; and they who had been bound by all the ties of constancy and love, now kneel before the altar to sanctify those bonds. Who could think, without emotion, on all the trials they had endured ? who could look unmoved on the prospect of happiness that was now spread before them ? Their sorrows had been great ; but it seemed at this moment that sorrow had strengthened their feelings to magnify joy. The shade of thought it had cast on their minds had given them the power to reflect on their bliss, and to give intensity to happiness, which gaiety would have weakened. Dacre pressed her to his heart. He called her by the sacred name of wife. She felt an earthly paradise was gained, and she was right ; for they had entered upon that garden by the path which brings no poison to destroy its beauty, or dispel its fragrance. They had not been lured and dazzled by some bright, easy road, which leads to gloom and disappointment ; but they had struggled through the rugged way which was overshadowed



by suffering and sorrow, to burst at once upon that sunny scene of many-coloured beauty. They could taste the happiness of unbounded confidence, and the mutual dependence which springs from mutual love. They could feel the joy, that in all things they were one, save in self love—that was exchanged for the love of each other.

THE END.

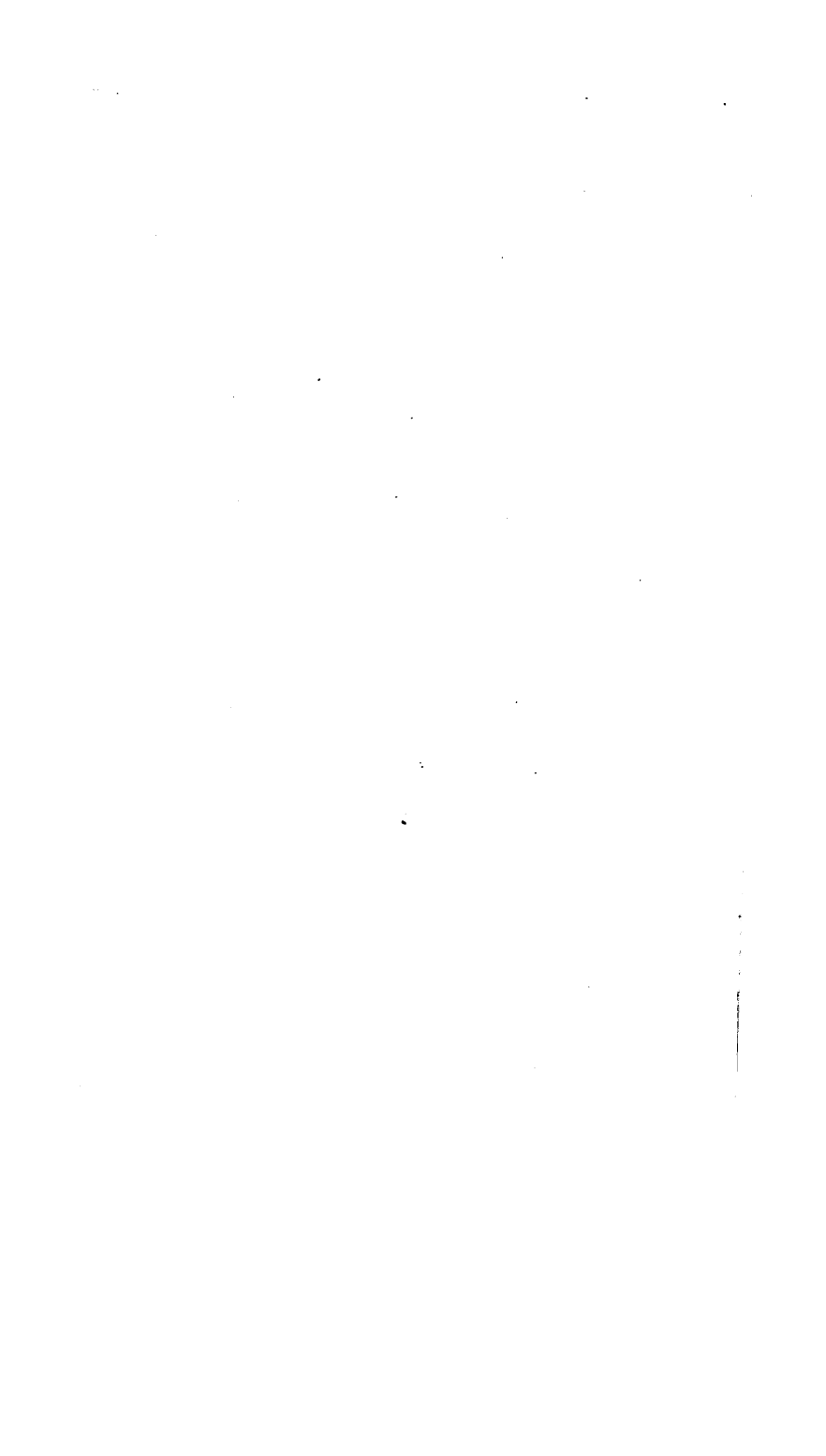




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